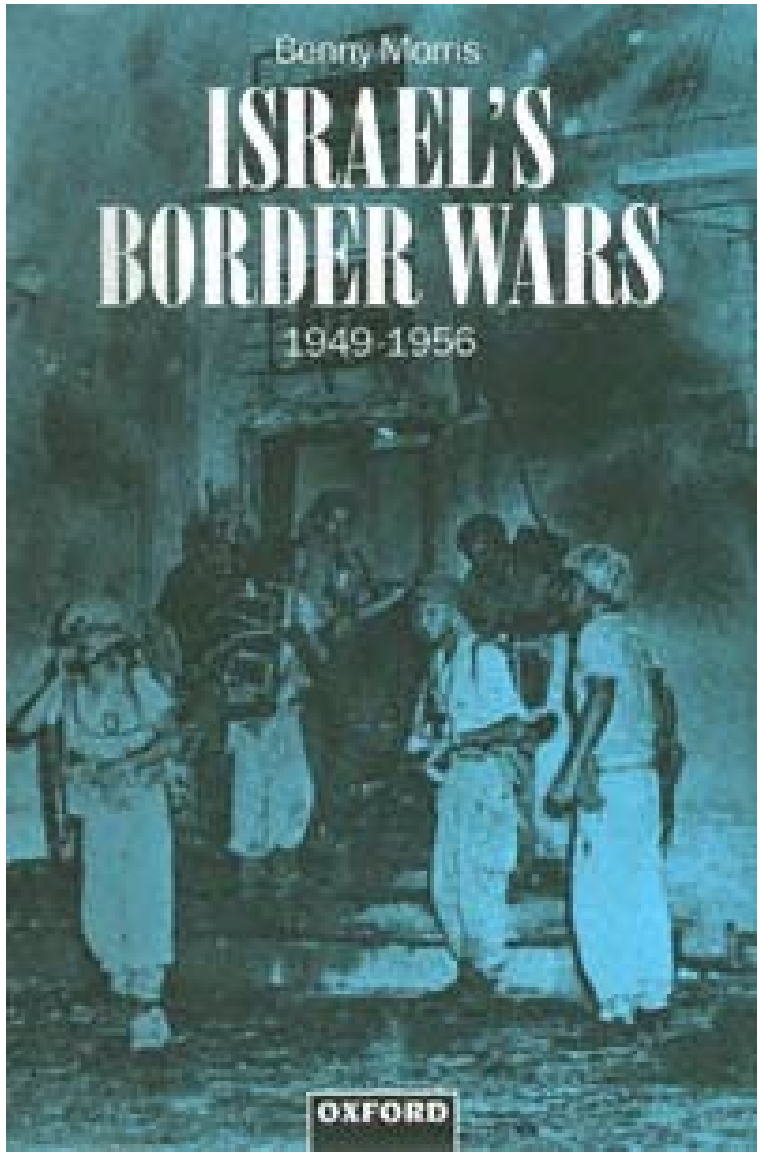

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Israel's Border Wars, 1949-1956

Arab Infiltration, Israeli Retaliation, and the Countdown to the Suez War

Benny Morris

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Preface

This is the first detailed study of the core phenomena of the Israeli-Arab conflict in the years 1949-56—Arab infiltration into Israel and Israel's responses, above all, the retaliatory policy. Together, they moulded the nature of Israeli-Arab relations and set patterns of behaviour that were to characterize the conflict for decades.

Hardening attitudes made peace contacts increasingly remote and the idea of concessions virtually inconceivable. The raiding and counter-raiding severely curbed the leaders' room for manœuvre, inextricably meshing the problems of day-to-day border security with the big strategic conundrum. Events, from the first Israeli-Arab war of 1948 onwards, almost naturally headed in a single direction, towards a 'Second Round', which duly arrived in October-November 1956.

The work tries to present a detailed narrative history while, at the same time, examining and analysing patterns and processes. It describes the emergence, from 1948, of the various types of infiltration, and the variety of defensive and offensive Israeli responses, culminating in the retaliatory policy. It tries to assess the effect of these responses on the Arab border communities and states. It describes the effects of infiltration on Israel's border settlements and on the country's economy and society. It looks, on the one hand, at the Arab states' attitudes to infiltration and at their efforts to cope with the phenomenon, and, on the other hand, at the Israeli decision-making processes. Finally, it evaluates the effect of the infiltrations and the reprisals on Israeli-Arab relations down to 1956.

Britain, the United States, and, eventually, the Soviet Union were all involved in the deteriorating Israeli-Arab border situation. However, during 1949-54, with rare exceptions, the Great Powers remained in the background, leaving the conflict localized. Israel's retaliatory policy, and particularly the Gaza Raid of February 1955, abruptly changed all that and the Middle East became another, major arena of East-West conflict, the Great Powers massively arming and forging alliances with the protagonists.

The historian of the post-colonial Middle East faces major problems of documentation, and this is particularly true of both sides in the ongoing Israeli-Arab conflict. Despite Israel's relatively liberal Archives Law and policy (by comparison, say, with the United Kingdom), the historian confronts formidable problems when it comes to Israeli documentation for the conflict during the years 1949-56. The protocols of Cabinet meetings remain closed (for fifty years, at least); and the overwhelming bulk of

Defence Ministry and Israel Defence Forces (IDF) documents remain classified.

None the less, a great deal of material is available and the historian, I believe, can build a relatively clear picture of events and of Israeli policies and decision-making processes. Much of the civilian decision-making process is available in declassified ministry records, and a great deal of military documentation is also now available in the archives of civilian bodies such as the ministries, the Jewish Agency Settlement Department, and the Ben-Gurion Archive (BGA). The Israel Defence Ministry and IDF Archive (IDFA) made a certain (highly selective and highly censored) amount of material available to me. Private papers, diaries, and memoirs—and, particularly, the eight volumes of Moshe Sharett's *Yoman Ishi* (personal diary)—have proved very useful. One may also glean useful facts and insights from Ben-Gurion's diary.

The situation is much more difficult when it comes to the Arab (Palestinian, Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian, and Lebanese) side. No Arab state has opened its state papers to researchers, Arab or non-Arab. Nevertheless, I believe that the wealth of Western (American, British, and UN) documentation on and from the Arab capitals provides a good basis for drawing a reasonably convincing picture of Arab thinking, decision-making, policies, and actions during these years. Many American and British diplomats in the Arab capitals (and in Jerusalem) had access to good sources and UN records are extremely useful in establishing the chronology and character of the border incidents which lie at the core of this study. Some Arab documentation is also to be found in Western archives. Particularly important are the large deposits of Arab Legion memoranda and cables from the period 1949-56 in Britain's Public Record Office (PRO). To this must be added Israeli intelligence material on and from the Arab states, which occasionally yields information and insight. Lastly, I have also tapped some relevant Arab memoirs.

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In the course of the research I had the rather dubious privilege of seeing material in the IDFA. I was given access not to files but, rather, only to photocopies of documents specifically selected for me by the archive's officials. In some cases, certain lines had been blacked out in the photocopies. I was not allowed to see any material relating to IDF reprisals or to the trials of soldiers who had committed atrocities. I doubt whether this serves the purposes of good historiography, or whether this really serves Israeli interests, which IDFA officials probably believed they were protecting.

Elsewhere, I had an easier time. I am indebted to a great many archivists. Dr Yehoshua Freundlich, of the Israel State Archives, deserves special thanks. I would also like to thank Yoram Mayorek, the director of the Central Zionist Archives (CZA), who enabled me to see some important uncatalogued material. My thanks go to the archivists of two Israeli political archives, Mapam's and Mapai's, where I found rewarding material, and to the Ben-Gurion Archive in Sdeh Boqer. The archivists of the Public Record Office (PRO) and the National Archive (NA) were their usual helpful selves.

In writing this study I made use of a great deal of material from local Israeli archives, especially in border kibbutzim. I would especially like to thank the archivists of Yad-Mordechai, Zikim, Erez, Nahal-Oz, Ruhama, and Dorot.

My thanks also go to Dvora Getzler, who helped delete many superfluities and infelicities, to Tim Barton, my editor at OUP, and to Janet Moth, his assistant. I would also like to convey my gratitude to the lawyers of Israel's Civil Rights Association, who helped smooth the passage of this volume through Israel's military censors.

Lastly, my thanks go as usual, to my wife—Leah—and my children—Erel, Yagi, and Orian.

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Abbreviations and Glossary

ARAMCO	Arabian-American Oil Company
AFSC	American Friends Service Committee (Quakers)
AFSCA	American Friends Service Committee Archive
AHC	Arab Higher Committee
ASA	Arab Salvation (or Liberation) Army
BG or DBG	David Ben-Gurion
BGA	Ben-Gurion Archive (Sdeh Boqer)
CGS	Chief of general staff (IDF)
CIGS	Chief of Imperial General Staff
CO	Commanding Officer
CZA	Central Zionist Archives (Jerusalem)
DFPI	*Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel* (series published by Israel State Archives)
DMI	IDF Director of Military Intelligence or OC Intelligence Department and, later, Branch
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DOA	Department of Army (US)
EIMAC	Egypt-Israel Mixed Armistice Commission
Fedayeen	(Arabic) self-sacrificers or guerrillas
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale (Algeria)
FM	Foreign Ministry (Israel)
FO	Foreign Office (UK)
GSS	General Security Service or Sherut HaBitachon HaKlali (Shin Bet), Israel's internal security service
Haganah	(Hebrew: the defence), the mainstream, labour-affiliated underground militia of the Yishuv
HHA	HaShomer HaTza`ir Archive (Giv`at Haviva, Israel)
IAF	Israel Air Force
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDF	Israel Defence Forces, the Israeli army
IDFA	Israel Defence Ministry and IDF Archive (Giv`atayim)
IJMAC	Israel-Jordan Mixed Armistice Commission
ILMAC	Israel-Lebanon Mixed Armistice Commission
ISA	Israel State Archives (Jerusalem)
IZL	*Irgun Zva`i Le`umi* (National Military Organization or *Irgun*), the military wing of the Zionist Revisionist movement
Jewish Agency	The 'government' of the Yishuv before 1948
JNF	Jewish National Fund (the land-purchasing and reclamation agency of the Zionist movement)

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Kat"am	see SDO
Kibbutz	(Hebrew) Israeli collective settlement
KKL	*Keren Kayemet LeYisrael* (Hebrew for JNF)
KMA-AZP	Kibbutz Me`uhad Archive-Aharon Zisling Papers (Ef`al)
KMA-PA	Kibbutz Me`uhad Archive-Palmah Archive (Ef`al)
LA	Labour Archive (Histadrut, Tel Aviv)
LCA	Local Commanders Agreement
LHI	*Lohamei Herut Yisrael* (Freedom Fighters of Israel or Stern Gang), an extreme right-extreme left Jewish terrorist organization in British Mandate days
LPA	Labour Party Archive (Beit Berl, Israel)
ma"az	(Hebrew: *mefaked eizor* (area commander)), settlement security officer (plural: ma"azim)
MAC	Mixed Armistice Commission, UN-chaired armistice supervision body
MAM	Minority Affairs Ministry (Israel)
MK	Member of Knesset (Israel's parliament)
moshav	(Hebrew) Israeli co-operative agricultural settlement
Mossad	HaMossad LeModi`in U`Letafkidim Meyuhadim (the institute for intelligence and special duties), Israel's foreign intelligence service
muhzak	(Hebrew: kept one), state-employed settlement guard (plural: *muhzakim*)
NA	National Archive (Washington DC)
Na"hal	(Hebrew: *no`ar halutzi lohem* (pioneering fighting youth)), a corps of the IDF whose servicemen carry out both combat and settlement duties
NCO	non-commissioned officer
NEA	Office of Near Eastern Affairs (US State Department)
NG	National Guard (Jordan)
OC	Officer in Command
PCC	United Nations Palestine Conciliation Commission
PMO	Prime Minister's Office (Israel)
PREM	Prime Minister's bureau (London)
PRO	Public Record Office
RCC	Revolutionary Command Council (Egypt)
RG	Record Group
SDO	Special Duties Officer (*Katzin LeTafkidim Meyuhadim* or Kat"am), an IDF Intelligence Department or Branch agent-runner, or controller
SecState	US Secretary of State (in cable traffic)
SUNMO	Senior UN Military Observer
UN	United Nations

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UNA	United Nations Archive
UNEF	United Nations Emergency Force, UN peacekeeping force inserted along the Egyptian-Israeli border after the Sinai-Suez War
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, provides the Palestinian refugees with relief (food, health, and education services, etc.)
UNTSO	United Nations Truce Supervision Organization; supervises the Israeli-Arab borders
US	United States
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USN	United States Navy
Yishuv	(Hebrew) collective name for the Jewish community in Palestine (usually applied to pre-May 1948 days)
WO	War Office (UK)

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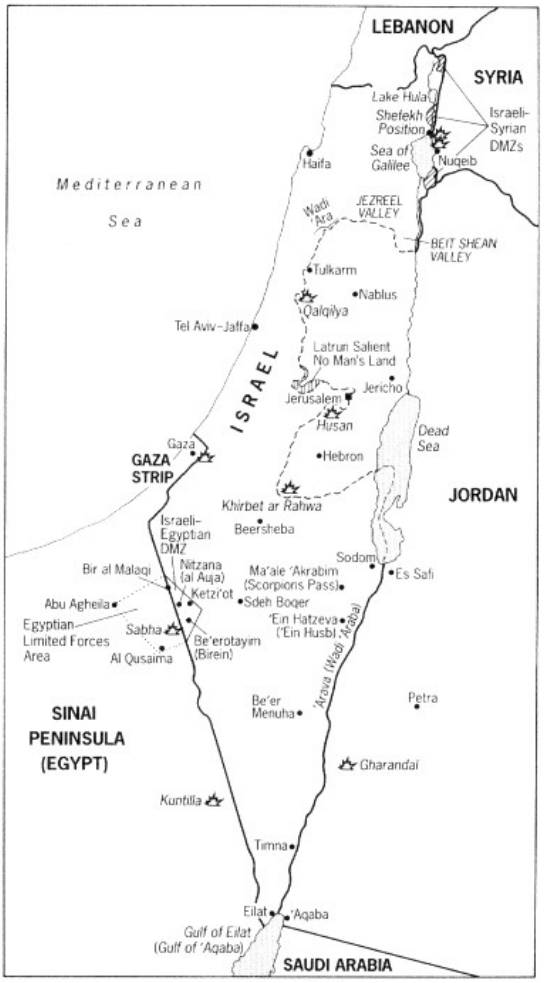

MAP 1.
The 1949 armistice borders, the DMZs, and the major IDF retaliatory strikes of 1955-6.

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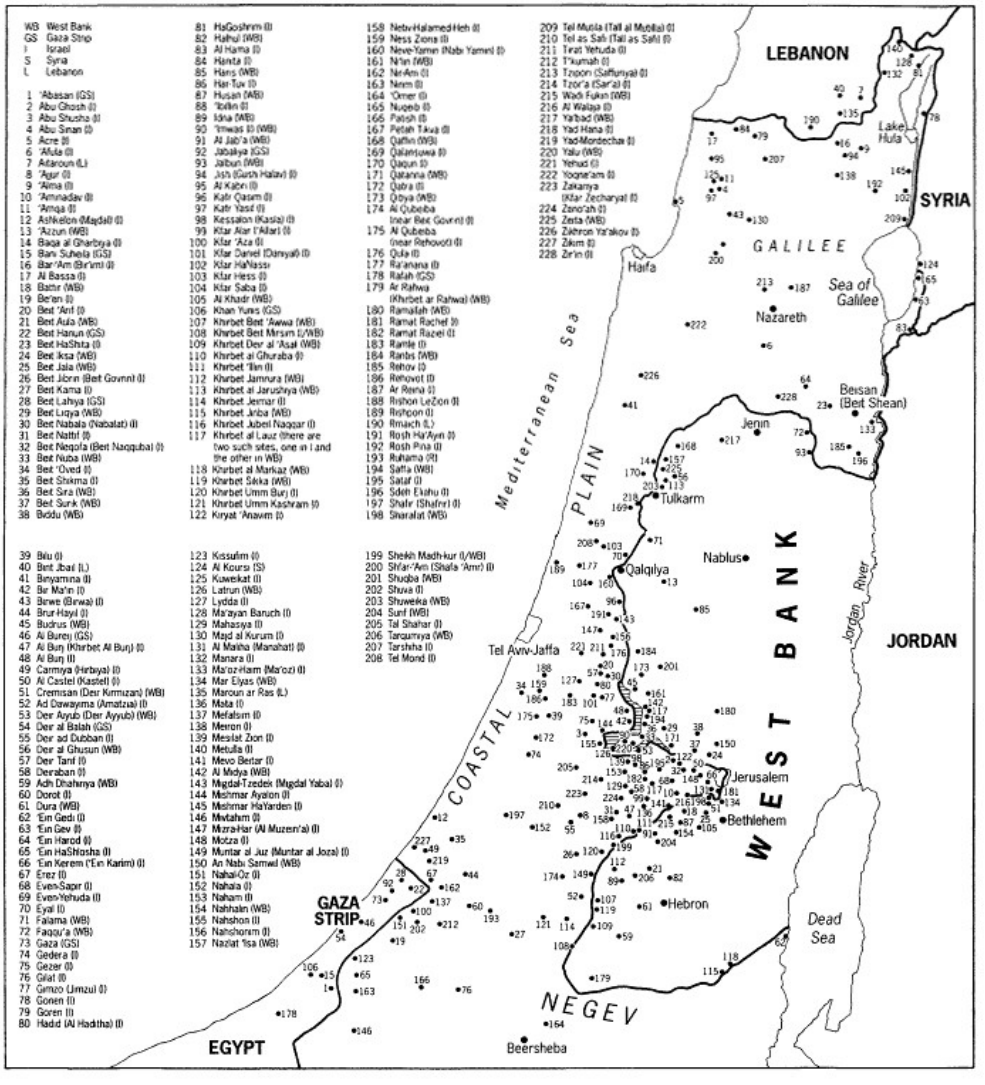

MAP 2.
Sites of border incidents.

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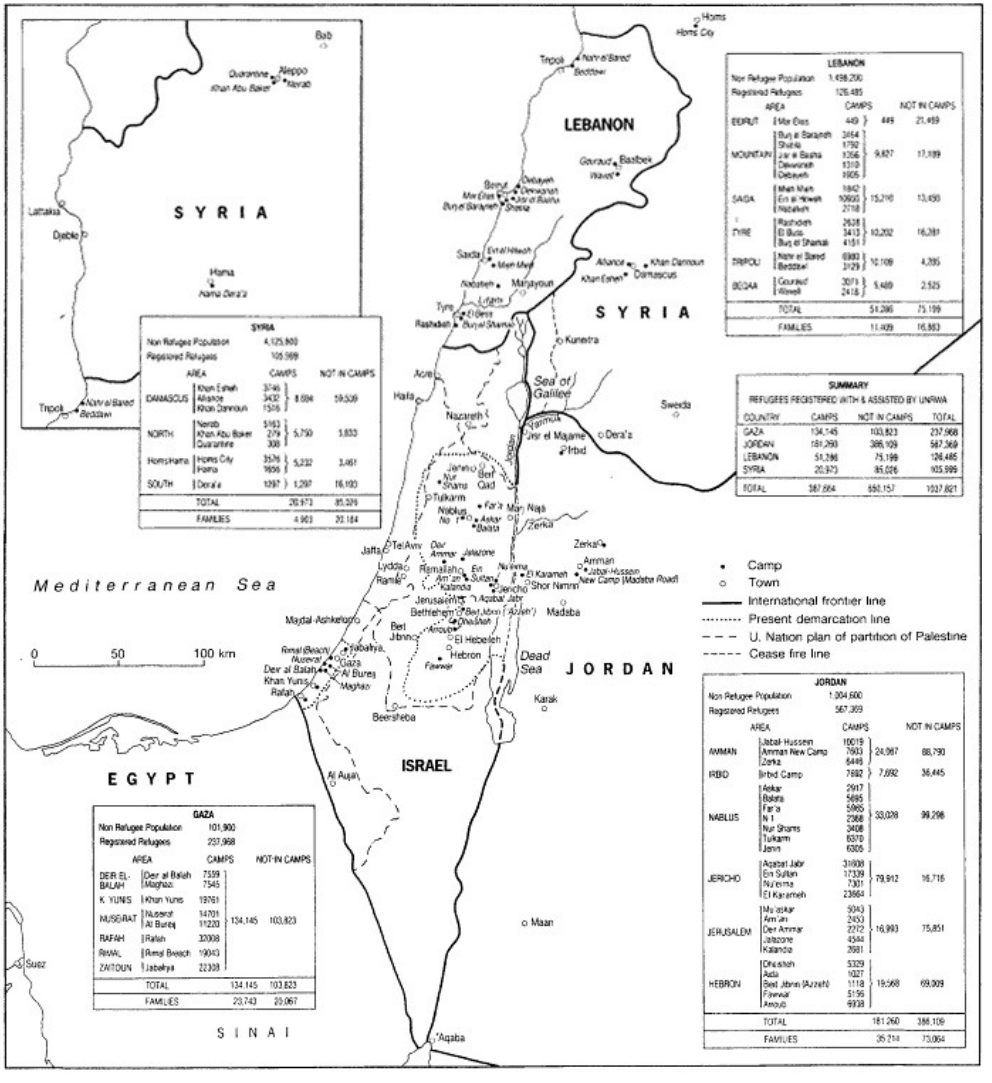
SYRIA
LEBANON
SYRIA
JORDAN
ISRAEL
EGYPT
SINAI
Mediterranean Sea
Dead Sea
Sea of Galilee
0 50 100 km
Camp
Town
International frontier line
Present demarcation line
U. Nation plan of partition of Palestine
Cease fire line
SYRIA
Non Refugee Population 4,125,800
Registered Refugees 105,999
AREA CAMPS NOT IN CAMPS
DAMASCUS Khan Eshieh 3746 Alliance 3432 Khan Dannoun 1506 8,684 59,539
NORTH Neirab 5163 Khan Abu Baker 279 Quarantine 308 5,750 5,833
Homs/Hama Homs City 3576 Hama 1656 5,232 3,461
SOUTH Dera'a 1297 1,297 16,100
TOTAL 20,973 85,329
FAMILIES 4,903 20,184
LEBANON
Non Refugee Population 1,498,200
Registered Refugees 126,485
AREA CAMPS NOT IN CAMPS
BEIRUT Mar Elias 449 449 21,469
MOUNTAIN Burj el Barajneh 3464 Shatila 1792 Jisr el Basha 1356 Dekwaneh 1310 Debayeh 1905 9,827 17,899
SAIDA Mieh Mieh 1842 En el Hilweh 10600 Nabatieh 2718 15,210 13,450
TYRE Rashidieh 2628 El Buss 3413 Burj el Shamali 4151 10,202 16,281
TRIPOLI Nahr el Bared 6980 Beddawi 3129 10,109 4,285
BEQAA Gouraud 3071 Wavell 2418 5,489 2,525
TOTAL 54,286 75,199
FAMILIES 11,409 16,853
SUMMARY
REFUGEES REGISTERED WITH & ASSISTED BY UNRWA
COUNTRY CAMPS NOT IN CAMPS TOTAL
GAZA 134,145 103,823 237,968
JORDAN 181,293 386,109 567,369
LEBANON 51,286 75,199 126,485
SYRIA 20,973 85,026 105,999
TOTAL 387,664 650,157 1037,821
GAZA
Non Refugee Population 101,900
Registered Refugees 237,968
AREA CAMPS NOT-IN CAMPS
DEIR EL-BALAH Deir al Balah 7539 Maghazi 7545
K. YUNIS Khan Yunis 19761
MUSDRAT Nuseirat 14701 Al Bureij 11220 134,145 103,823
RAFAH Rafah 32008
RMAL Rimal Beach 19043
ZAITOUN Jabelya 22308
TOTAL 134,145 103,823
FAMILIES 23,743 20,067
JORDAN
Non Refugee Population 1,004,600
Registered Refugees 567,369
AREA CAMPS NOT IN CAMPS
AMMAN Jabal Hussein 10019 Amman New Camp 7603 Zerka 6449 24,067 88,790
IRBID Irbid Camp 7692 7,692 36,445
NABLUS Askar 2917 Balata 5695 Far'a 5965 N 1 2568 Nur Shams 3408 Tulkarm 6370 Jenin 6305 33,028 99,296
JERICHO Aqabat Jabr 31608 Ein Sultan 17339 Nu'eima 7301 El Karameh 23864 79,912 16,716
JERUSALEM Mu'askar 5043 Am'ari 2453 Deir Ammar 2272 Jalazone 4544 Kalandia 2981 16,993 75,851
HEBRON Dheisheh 5329 Aida 1027 Beit Jibrin (Azzeh) 1118 Fawwar 5156 Arroub 6938 19,568 69,909
TOTAL 181,260 386,109
FAMILIES 35,714 75,064

MAP 3.
Palestinian refugee camps and populations, 1958.

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1
Israel, the Arabs, and the Great Powers after the 1948 War

The Borders

The 1948 war officially ended with the signing in the spring and summer of 1949 of a series of 'general armistice' agreements between Israel and each of its neighbours (Israel-Egypt—24 February; Israel-Lebanon—23 March; Israel-Jordan—3 April; Israel-Syria—20 July). But, for all practical purposes, the fighting between Israel and Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan had already ended in the summer of 1948; only the war with Egypt continued through the autumn and ended in January 1949. Most of the borders delineated in the armistice accords followed the previous international boundaries (the Israeli-Lebanese border; the Israeli-Syrian border; the Israeli-Jordanian border along the Beit Shean Valley and the `Arava; and the Israeli-Egyptian border separating the Negev and the Sinai Peninsula). Other borders (such as along the Gaza Strip) were determined by the situation of the opposing armies when the fighting ended. The most problematic and unnatural border, that between Israel and Jordan along the West Bank, was determined by the military front lines and by the Jordanian-Israeli armistice negotiations, which resulted in Jordan ceding a strip of territory in the Samarian foothills, from Wadi `Ara southwards to Kafr Qasim.

Israel's only 'natural' borders, with Syria and then (East) Jordan, more or less coincided with the Jordan Rift, running south along the Jordan River to the Sea of Galilee and the Beit Shean (Beisan) Valley and then, along the Dead Sea, from `Ein Gedi, through the `Arava, to a point between `Aqaba and Um Rashrash (later the port city of Eilat) on the Gulf of `Aqaba. Israel shared a frontier of close to 400 miles with Jordan; 160 miles with Egypt; and some forty miles each with Lebanon and Syria. But Israel's borders with Lebanon and Egypt followed no natural contours, and the Israeli-West Bank border was a strategist's and politician's nightmare: its more than 200 miles followed no straight line; it lacked all natural bounds; gave Jordan—which had conquered the West Bank in 1948—the dominating high ground; and left Israel—even after the armistice adjustment—with a narrow, ten-mile wide 'waist' between the western edge of the West Bank (Qalqilya, Tulkarm) and the Mediterranean coast. Theoretically, a tank could cross Israel from Qalqilya to the sea in

fifteen minutes; a jet aircraft, in less than a minute. The complete absence of natural obstacles and the rough, rocky, tree- and scrub-clad terrain made it easy for civilian and military raiders to cross the lines. An Israel police report defined this border as

> an example of how not to demarcate frontiers. The border . . . runs only a few metres away from vital transportation lines, it separates . . . farmers who live on one side [from] the lands they have tilled for generations . . . on the other side . . . . And, the most important thing, it divides . . . Arab villages linked by-ties of family and, even worse, on occasion cuts in half whole villages.[1]

Between 1949 and 1956 these frontiers were plagued by violence. Some of the violence stemmed from the actual terms of the armistice agreements. Specifically, the Israeli-Egyptian and Israeli-Syrian accords established 'demilitarized zones' (DMZs) on the Israeli side of the former international line as a way of finessing territorial disputes. The accords avoided mention of who would be sovereign over these zones. Almost inevitably, divergent claims to the DMZs resulted in armed clashes to assert or protect control and sovereignty. Israel and Syria clashed over them in 1951; Israel and Egypt, in 1955. Given the superiority of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), Israel eventually 'won the arguments' and incorporated most of the zones into its territory.

Israel

The new state of Israel that had emerged from the war was minuscule—covering a mere 8,000 square miles—and impoverished, and lacked almost all natural resources. It came into the world battered but triumphant. Its various ministries, departments, services, agencies, and authorities, had been established in the maelstrom of a war rightly seen by the Yishuv, the Jewish community in Palestine/Israel, as a struggle for survival. National and physical existence had been at stake, at least until July 1948. The war had been launched by the Palestinian Arabs (November-December 1947) and the surrounding Arab states (May 1948), and the Arabs had lost. The Palestine Arab community had been shattered, some 600,000-760,000 becoming refugees, its territory (as earmarked in the UN Partition Resolution of November 1947) occupied by Israel, Jordan, and Egypt. The Arab states—all but Jordan—had been defeated, their invading armies battered and turned back, the Egyptian army barely avoiding annihilation. But the cost to Israel had been grave. Some 6,000 Jews—of a pre-state

[1] Infiltration—Annual Survey, 1.1.52-31.12.52', Israel Police Special Branch, Section for Combating Infiltration, undated but with covering note, A. (or E.) Katznelenbogen to IDF General Staff/Operations, 3 Mar. 1953, ISA FM 2402/12.

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Jewish population of 650,000—had died, and at least twice that number had been wounded. Dozens of border settlements had been severely damaged, and the economy had been considerably disrupted. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of mostly destitute Jews—survivors of Europe's death and concentration camps and refugees and emigrants from the Muslim world—poured into the country. Almost none of them knew any Hebrew, the language of the country; many were illiterate; and many lacked professions or vocational skills. Tens of thousands, indeed, had been abruptly transported from a primitive, pre-modern environment to a twentieth-century society. Between 1948 and 1951 the country absorbed some 700,000 immigrants, more than doubling the pre-state Jewish population.

Years of tumultuous nation-building, under extremely difficult conditions, followed. While demobilizing most of its 90,000-strong army, the new state set about the gigantic tasks of feeding, housing, educating, and employing the new immigrants, rebuilding its economy, and settling the new long borders and the inland areas emptied of their original Arab inhabitants during the war. A demographic, agricultural, educational, and economic revolution took place.

Israel established diplomatic relations with most of the world's states, including the United States and the Soviet Union, and took its place in the United Nations. The Muslim world, guided by the Arab states, refused to recognize the new state and instituted a comprehensive boycott. During 1948-50, with the world gripped by Cold War, Israel gradually gravitated towards the Free World. Though it had been armed during 1948 by the East Bloc, its ideological affiliation to Western democratic values, its political and economic ties with the West, and its ethnic, economic, and political links with Western Jewry proved decisive.[2]

The Palestinians

The second major problem stemming from the border demarcations in the Israeli-Arab armistice agreements was rooted in the cession by Jordan in summer 1949 of the strip of land extending from Wadi `Ara southwards, to the west of Tulkarm and Qalqilya, down to Kafr Qasim. The territory ceded, on pain of an Israeli threat to renew hostilities (which the far weaker Jordanians feared), encompassed fifteen or sixteen Arab villages, including Umm al Fahm, Baqa al Gharbiya, Qalansuwa, At Taiyiba, At Tira, and Kafr Qasim, whose inhabitants would have preferred to remain

[2] U. Bialer, *Between East and West: Israel's Foreign Policy Orientation, 1948-1956* (Cambridge, 1990), *passim.*

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under Arab rule. Far worse, the strip included tracts of arable land belonging to several dozen villages on the eastern—i.e. Jordanian—side of the line. Thousands of West Bank villagers thus lost much of their cultivated land—and a greater or lesser part of their livelihood. Infiltration by these *fellahin* to cultivate 'their' lands and to reap 'their' crops was almost inevitable. A similar separation of *fellahin* from their lands occurred along the Gaza Strip-Israeli border as a result of the Israeli-Egyptian armistice agreement. But here the problem, restricted to the lands of `Abasan and Bani Suheila, and several small bedouin tribes, was on a much smaller scale and was largely resolved by a small Israeli-Egyptian territorial exchange agreement concluded in 1950.

A British report from 1952 asserted that about one quarter of the West Bank's non-refugee population of 485,000 was 'slowly starving, and a further substantial proportion are not far above the same level and may soon sink below it'. The 'wholly destitute', according to the report, consisted of '47,000' (of '76,000') border villagers, '20,000' who had migrated inland from the frontier villages, '19,000' East Jerusalem slum-dwellers, and '34,000' 'others'. Some 17,000 of the 'wholly destitute' border villagers received 'half-rations' from UNRWA (while the remaining '30,000', 'equally in need', did not). In general, agricultural production in the West Bank could not meet the (growing) population's needs. There was a widespread 'strong desire to emigrate' from the area, according to the British official.

The problem of the dispossessed West Bank border villagers meshed with that of the far more numerous Palestinian refugees from the 1948 fighting. There had been, all told, between 1.2 and 1.3 million Palestinian Arabs in the lands west of the Jordan River before 1948. By the end of 1949, about 160,000 Palestinian Arabs remained in the territory that became Israel, a further 350,000-400,000 remained in their homes in the villages and towns of the West Bank, which was incorporated and annexed by Jordan during 1948-50, and some 60,000 more remained in the Gaza Strip, which came under Egyptian rule.

Some 600,000-760,000 Palestinians—or roughly half the pre-1948 Palestinians—lost their homes and lands in the war, and left the territory that became Israel, turning into refugees. Most of them settled in areas adjacent or close to Israel's borders. Most wanted to return to their homes; many sought to cross the frontier at least to retrieve abandoned goods and crops from the Jews, their usurpers and dispossessers. Almost all were destitute. Inevitably, as with the West Bank border villagers, many turned to infiltration to supplement their livelihood; some infiltrated to resettle in Israel or visit relatives; some, to take revenge.

About half the refugees—350,000-400,000—settled in Jordan; most in the West Bank; a minority, in the East Bank. About one-third of the

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350,000-400,000, most of them *fellahin*, ended up in refugee camps, of which there were twenty in the West Bank (`Askar, Balata, Far`a, Camp No. 1, Nur Shams, Tulkarm, Jenin, Mu`askar, `Amari, Deir `Ammar, Jalazone, Qalandia, Dheisheh, Aida, Beit Jibrin (Azzeh), Fawwar, `Arrub, `Aqabat Jabr, `Ein Sultan, and Nu`eima), and five in the East Bank (Jabal Hussein, `Amman New Camp, Zarqa, Irbid, and Karameh). Another half a dozen camps were added during the decades after 1956, most of them in the East Bank. Most of the refugees dispersed and settled in existing towns and villages, mostly in the West Bank. Another 200,000 refugees, mostly from Israel's coastal plain, settled in the Gaza Strip. About 60 per cent of them ended up in eight refugee camps (Deir al Balah, Maghazi, Khan Yunis, Nuseirat, Bureij, Rafah, Rimal Beach, and Jabaliya); the rest, in towns and villages. Another 100,000 refugees ended up in Lebanon, about 40 per cent in refugee camps around Tyre, Sidon, Beirut, Baalbek, and Tripoli; and over 60,000 in Syria, mostly in refugee camps around Damascus.

The best-off refugees during 1949-56 were those who had fled to Jordan. They received Jordanian citizenship (in December 1949) and were integrated in various ways into the Kingdom. But, at the same time, they were left with a separate refugee identity, necessary to obtain Western and UN aid and promote the political aim of repatriation. But in Jordan, too, the refugees felt hard done by. King `Abdullah promoted the economic and cultural development of the East Bank over that of the more advanced West Bank. East Bankers received preference in civil service jobs, and Palestinians in general were kept out of the combat units of the Jordanian army, the Arab Legion, and were almost invariably barred from becoming officers. East Bankers by and large regarded the refugees with contempt, blaming them for the loss of Palestine. The Palestinians, for their part, blamed the Arab world, including the Hashemites, for the loss of their land. The Hashemites, dependent on subsidies from Whitehall, were seen as protégés of Britain, which had abetted Zionism and the Zionist takeover of Palestine. The Palestinians in general looked down on the East Bank 'bedouin', who ruled over them.[3]

During 1949-56 there was some movement of refugees from camps in the West Bank and of young people from West Bank border villages to Jordan's East Bank. In the early years, this was periodically encouraged, if not coerced, by the Jordanian authorities, who wanted to move as many refugees as possible away from the troubled border areas.[4]

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[3] S. Roger Tyler jun. (Jerusalem) to State Dept., 19 June 1952, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 7, 884.00/6-1952, enclosing 'Review of Economic Conditions in Arab Palestine including Arab Jerusalem' by A. R. Walmsley (British Consulate-General, Jerusalem), 9 Feb. 1952; A. Plascov, *The Palestinian Refugees in Jordan, 1948-1957* (London, 1981), 32-3.

[4] Plascov, *Refugees*, 79, 85. Plascov says that, worried about this unbidden emptying of the border area, the Jordanian government in the mid-1950s took measures to compel youngsters to stay. At one point, for example, Amman instructed UNRWA not to give ration privileges to border villagers moving to the East Bank.

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Jordan

`Abdullah's conquest and annexation of the West Bank in 1948-9 had increased the Kingdom's size and importance, turning a marginal desert fiefdom into the sovereign over some of the world's holiest sites—the Old City of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, Jericho, and Nablus. The Kingdom's agricultural resources and manpower were vastly increased by the incorporation of hundreds of thousands of relatively well-educated Palestinians. But, at the same time, this inexorably weakened `Abdullah's regime. A more-or-less homogeneous population of loyal bedouin was replaced, at a stroke, by a heterogeneous mass composed of a Palestinian majority largely indifferent or hostile to Hashemite rule, half of whom were destitute, embittered refugees. The 'Palestinization' of the Kingdom thus opened the door to external subversion, by the followers of the former Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al Husayni, and, in time, by pan-Arab and Nasserist elements. The Kingdom devoted much of its energy in 1949-56 to digesting the West Bank and its recalcitrant Palestinians and to fending off efforts at subversion and agitation.

The monarchy as well as the integrity of the state rested on the Arab Legion, which also controlled the country's police and intelligence services. It was also the Kingdom's chief bulwark against Israel, the main non-Arab external threat, seen by Jordanians as irremediably expansionist. General John Bagot Glubb, the Legion's commander, and Whitehall, which financed the Legion, also regarded it as the only dependable bulwark against Communist expansion in the Arab World.[5] The British subsidy was complemented by the Anglo-Jordanian defence treaty, signed in 1946 and modified in 1948, which assured Jordan of British military and political help if invaded. The Legion, the only Arab army to have acquitted itself well against Israel, grew from around 6,000 in 1948 to 17,000-20,000 in 1953 to 25,000 in 1956.[6]

The Legion's combat units were based on bedouin recruits from the East Bank. The senior officers (brigade, battalion, and branch commanding officers) were generally Britons, seconded from the British army or on special contracts; their deputies were usually Arab. In 1955-6 the Legion had a complement of seventy-five British officers.

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[5] 'Jordan's National Guard', Arab Legion HQ, 11 July 1954, PRO FO 371-110925; P. J. Vatikiotis, *Politics and the Military in Jordan: A Study of the Arab Legion, 1921-1957* (London, 1967), 52; 'The Arab Legion', FO, 13 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-115682. In 1955 London spent £10 million on the Arab Legion. The whole of Jordan's national budget that year was £16 million.

[6] Vatikiotis, *Arab Legion*, 81; 'The Arab Legion', PRO FO 371-115682; Glubb to Field Marshal Sir John Harding, CIGS, 21 Sept. 1955, PRO WO 216/854. With the Legion's expansion, more and more Palestinians were recruited, especially for the technical corps (C. B. Duke (Amman) to Shuckburgh, FO, 6 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115683).

Throughout 1949-56 Glubb adhered to a defensive strategy, keeping the bulk of the Legion on the East Bank, in readiness for an IDF assault on the West Bank (which Glubb thought might involve a thrust down the Jordan Valley from Beit Shean to the Dead Sea). The West Bank itself was thinly held, with several Legion battalions concentrated in the territory's hilly spine, well back from the frontier. Even when tensions and incidents mounted during the early and mid-1950s, Glubb firmly resisted Palestinian importuning to deploy all or much of the Legion in the West Bank and disperse it in small units along the frontier.[7]

In compensation, to beef up the villagers' ability to resist Israeli attack (and to enable Glubb to resist the pressures for Legion deployment in the West Bank), the Legion CO in 1949-50 set up a border villages militia. Initially designated the 'Home Guard', and later renamed the 'National Guard' (NG), it was consciously modelled on 'the Jewish [i.e. Haganah] system of defence'.[8] The Jordanian government was initially wary of Glubb's efforts to set up the NG, fearing that weapons in Palestinian hands might ultimately be turned against the regime. But West Bankers viewed it as a token of Amman's commitment to their defence.

The Legion recruited and armed with light weapons between eight and fifteen persons in each village, service initially being voluntary, with each village receiving ten rifles (thirty in the mid-1950s). In February 1950 service in the NG became compulsory for all males aged 18-40. But the law was only gradually applied, and not applied to refugees or East Bankers until 1955-6, when the NG numbered 30,000 men organized in territorial battalions. Guardsmen received about thirty days' training a year from Legion non-commissioned officers (NCOs) (who were occasionally stationed in the villages). The guardsmen were called upon to fight off or at least stall IDF raiders. The NG was also charged with curbing Arab infiltration into Israel.[9] Throughout, the NG was under the administrative and operational control of the Legion. Arab regimes antagonistic to the Hashemites repeatedly tried to 'get at' the NG and its members to turn them against Amman.[10]

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[7] J. B. Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs* (London, 1957), 361-5.

[8] C. P. Gordon (Amman) to Bevin, 9 July 1949, and attached 'A Plan for the Military Training of the People', Gen. Glubb, undated; minute by B. A. B. Burrows, 9 Sept. 1949; Lt.-Col. H. B. Calvert, WO, to J. E. Chadwick, FO, 8 Sept. 1949; Sir W. Strang to minister of defence, 19 Sept. 1949, all in PRO FO 371-75298; Y. Paz, 'HaMishmar HaLe`umi HaYardeni', *Ma`arachot* (Mar. 1956), 35-41.

[9] Paz, 'HaMishmar HaLe`umi'; Vatikiotis, *Arab Legion*, 79-80; A. S. Kirkbride, *From the Wings: Amman Memoirs, 1947-1951* (London, 1976), 106-7.

[10] 'Jordan's National Guard', Arab Legion HQ, 11 July 1954, PRO FO 371-110925; Paz, 'HaMishmar HaLe`umi'.

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Egypt

Egypt emerged from the 1948 war with its army battered, its policies in disrepute, and its monarchy mortally wounded. The Farouq regime was to expire of its wounds four years later. Egypt emerged from the war in control of the Gaza Strip but at loggerheads with its Arab coalition partners, Jordan, Iraq, and Syria, and under a cloud in Whitehall and Washington. It had a huge budget deficit and an army humiliated and starved of supplies.[11]

As if to compensate for defeat at non-Arab hands, the Egyptian government embarked on a collision course with Britain. The much-weakened Farouq struck out in a nationalist direction. On 8 October 1951, after prolonged, unfruitful negotiations, the Wafd-led government unilaterally abrogated the 1936 treaty with Britain and the 1899 Sudan Condominium Agreement. Anti-British rioting in the Suez Canal towns of Ismailia and Port Said, where Britain had bases, followed, and during November 1951-January 1952 there were frequent terrorist attacks on British troops along the Canal. Cairo was caught between an inability to control the terrorists and an unwillingness to confront the British. There was anti-government and anti-British rioting in the capital. On 25 January 1952 the British ordered all armed Egyptians, including police, out of Ismailia. The Egyptian government ordered the police to resist. Some fifty Egyptian police and gendarmes were killed in the ensuing clash in the Ismailia government compound. The next day, mobs burnt down parts of Cairo, destroying some 750 homes. Thirty people died. The breakdown of public order, follwed by a succession of weak governments, ultimately led to the Free Officers' *coup* of July 1952 and the overthrow of the Farouq regime.

The Egyptian army, which had carried out the *coup*, had been traumatized by the defeat in Palestine. Among those personally humiliated had been Major Gamal `Abdel Nasser, trapped by the IDF with his battalion in the 'Faluja Pocket' in the Negev between November 1948 and February 1949, and 'set-free' only by the conclusion of the Israeli-Egyptian armistice agreement.

The events of 1948 had scarred Nasser's generation of officers, who blamed the corrupt monarchy, and its British patrons, for the defeat. The clandestine 'Free Officers Movement', set up in the war's wake, was the upshot. The young officers struck on the night of 22/23 July 1952, occupying army headquarters, government offices, and broadcasting stations in Cairo. Farouq abdicated and left the country, and the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), headed by Nasser, took power.

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[11] P. J. Vatikiotis, *The Modern History of Egypt* (London, 1969), 367.

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Arab-Jewish Antagonism and the 'Missed' Peace

The armistice agreements ended a war which had seen the invading Lebanese, Syrian, Iraqi, Jordanian, and Egyptian armies suffer repulse. But they did not inaugurate an era of peace. Indeed, 1948 vastly aggravated the long existing hostility the Arab states felt for the burgeoning, alien Jewish presence in their midst by adding to it a sense of humiliation: Arab arms and policies had been resoundingly defeated by a puny Jewish community; they had lost territory; and the dispossessed Palestinian refugees emerged as a perennial rebuke and a proof of the Arab world's impotence.

In spring 1949 the UN's Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC) launched an Arab-Israeli peace 'conference' at Lausanne. While there were occasional, behind-the-scenes meetings between Israeli and Arab (mainly Jordanian and Egyptian) diplomats, the two sides never met and talked in formal, open session. That, the Arabs insisted, would amount to recognition, which was one of the points at issue and one of Israel's demands. The negotiations were conducted through PCC middlemen. The Arabs linked any progress—including agreement to meet—to Israeli willingness to repatriate all or many of the Palestinian refugees; the minimum number mentioned was 400,000. The Arabs also demanded Israeli withdrawal from much of the territory conquered in 1948. Israel, for its part, refused to part with territory and after months of foot-dragging agreed to take back some 65,000 refugees (the so-called '100,000 offer'). It proved a case of much too little, too late. The 'conference' ended in complete failure in September.[12]

Lausanne was one of the early signs of the calcification of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Another was the emergence of the concept of the 'Second Round'. The years 1949-56 turned out to be—as many, on both sides of the line, felt at the time—a violent interregnum between the First and Second Rounds. Even before the ink on the armistice agreements was dry, there arose in the Arab capitals a clamour for an avenging Second Round. Israel had won the First Round (1948), but the Arabs had enormous resources and patience. Eventually, the defeat would be avenged, the Palestinians redeemed, and the usurper brought low (or entirely destroyed). By the early 1950s ominous rumblings about an 'inevitable' Second Round were routine in the Arab capitals (and in Jerusalem). As Ben-Gurion put it at the end of 1955:

> Since 1947 [*sic*] . . . it was clear that we faced a second round . . . . (*A*) Because the neighbours did not want to make peace. (*B*) They did not want to recognize

[12] See B. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge, 1988), 254-85.

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> us. (*C*) They announced the [impending] second round. There was almost no Arab country that did not announce it. [Except] perhaps the Lebanese.[13]

And the Arabs' ultimate purpose, according to Ben-Gurion, was also clear:

> Our enemies are not only out to violate our territory and independence, and we mustn't have any illusion on this score. They intend, as many of them say openly, to throw us into the sea; simply put, to destroy all the Jews of the Land of Israel. And let us not forget that during World War II most of the Arab leaders were supporters of Hitler.[14]

But, in the immediate wake of 1948, incumbent Arab leaders were careful not to make a clear, public mention of a Second Round: Israel was too strong; and such utterances did not go down well with Western governments. Occasionally, Arab leaders spoke allusively of an eventual accounting; more often, they referred to the 'restoration of Palestinian rights'. Israeli officials usually interpreted such utterances as code words for Israel's destruction, and believed that their meaning was clear to Arab audiences. The Arab press, junior officials, and out-of-office politicians were often more forthright. The air resounded with references to the coming Second Round. Camille Chamoun, a Lebanese Christian politician and future president (1952-8) said as early as April 1949 that 'the war in Palestine will be renewed, sooner or later'. `Azmi Nashashibi, a senior Jordanian official, declared in the same month that the Arabs would not long recognize the armistice agreements. In private conversations, Arab leaders told the American journalist Kenneth Bilby that they would continue the struggle against Israel: even if it took a hundred years, 'the day of vengeance would come'. Arab politicians often spoke of 'Arab unity' as a prerequisite to successful revenge.[15] Kazim Badawi, a Palestinian official attending the start of a Jordanian NG course in the West Bank in 1949, was quoted as praising the militia's establishment as a preparation for the Second Round.[16]

But Second Round thinking was not confined to the Arabs. Israeli politicians and, occasionally, generals also indulged in it, usually in private. Arab talk of a Second Round certainly fuelled Israeli Second Round thinking, some of which was of a pre-emptive character. If the Arabs intended another war, it would be better to destroy their armies and

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[13] Protocol of Mapai Political Committee meeting, 28 Dec. 1955, LPA 26/55.

[14] Quoted in Z. Drori, 'Mediniyut HaGmul BeShnot Ha-50: Helko shel HaDereg HaTzva`i BeTahalich HaHaslama', MA thesis (Tel Aviv, 1988), 30.

[15] 'Reports from the Middle East Countries: Arab Threats to Renew the War against Israel (Mar.-Apr. 1949)', 6 May 1949, and addendum of 25 May 1949, Middle East Affairs Department, FM, ISA FM 2447/3.

[16] Plascov, *Refugees*, 98.

establish natural, more defensible borders before they were ready to launch their offensive. Such calculations coloured IDF thinking particularly in the years 1954-6.

But pre-emption was only one element in Israeli Second Round thinking. It also had a deep ideological strand. Zionist mainstream thought had always regarded a Jewish state from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River as its ultimate goal.[17] The vision of 'Greater Israel' as Zionism's ultimate objective did not end with the 1948 war. The politicians of the Right, primarily from the Revisionist Herut Party, led by Menachem Begin, continued through 1949 and the early and mid-1950s to clamour publicly for conquest of the West Bank.[18]

More mutedly, politicians of the socialist Tnu`ah LeAhdut Ha`Avoda, who, like those in Herut, believed in Greater Israel (or the 'Whole Land of Israel') as the necessary fulfilment of the Zionist vision, also continued to speak of an 'opportunity' that might yet enable Israel to conquer the West Bank. Ahdut Ha`Avoda's leaders, including Israel Galili and Yisrael Bar-Yehuda, made no bones about their desire to see Israel expand eastwards to the River Jordan, through peaceful means or by war (they usually spoke of such conquest as resulting from an Arab-initiated war).[19]

These ideological expansionists were joined by those who espoused expansion for (mainly) strategic reasons. Officer in Command (OC) Southern Command Yigal Allon, an Ahdut `Avoda-affiliated general, in March 1949 (long after the effective termination of Israeli-Jordanian hostilities, though before the signing of the armistice agreement), formally proposed to Ben-Gurion the conquest of the West Bank.[20]

Moshe Dayan, Ben-Gurion's favourite general, was open about his strategic inclinations:

> [He] does not give great weight to formal peace with the Arab states . . . . Dayan believes that the first battle in the process of the establishment of Israel as an independent state has not yet been completed because we have not yet determined whether the spacial character of today's state is final. The state must decide if our existing borders satisfy us and will remain as they are in the future . . . . During

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[17] For Ben-Gurion, see, e.g., Morris, *Birth*, 24.

[18] e.g. Haim Landau, a Herut MK and later a minister in the first Begin government, told the Knesset in 1953: 'Permanent [Israeli-Arab] peace will be achieved only when [Israel's] historical and strategic borders are reached' (*Divrei HaKnesset*, 15/1 (30 Nov. 1953), 279).

[19] Z. Tsur, *MiPulmus HaHaluka `Ad Tochnit Allon* (Ef al, 1982), 77-80. Yitzhak Tabenkin, the chief ideologist of Ahdut Ha`Avoda, said in 1953 that Jews should settle the 'empty' parts of the Land of Israel: 'The less-populated part, which is crying out for settlement . . . is outside our present boundaries'; Ahdut Ha`Avoda's affiliated kibbutz association, HaKibbutz HaMeuhad, ruled in February 1955: 'The Land of Israel in its natural borders [i.e. down to the Jordan River]—is the historic homeland of the Jewish people . . . where the fulfilment of the Zionist enterprise, *aliya* [i.e. immigration of Jews to Israel] and settlement are to be achieved' (both quotes in Tsur, *MiPulrnus HaHaluka*, 80).

[20] Y. Allon to Ben-Gurion, 8 Mar. 1949, quoted in Tsur, *MiPulmus HaHaluka*, 73.

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> the [1948] war, a view prevailed that if we moved eastwards towards the Jordan [River] we would have to face the British. General Dayan is not sure that this view was well founded and he believes that our time is still open to changes.[21]

A year earlier, in 1949, Dayan had been more explicit: 'Boundaries-Frontier of Israel should be on Jordan . . . . Present boundaries ridiculous from all points of view.' He added that Israel was willing to absorb the West Bank 'with its Arab population, including refugees'. He qualified this by adding that this 'expansion' would be 'by evolution and not . . . fighting'.[22] But Dayan did not always express himself in 'evolutionary' terms. In September 1952 he told a US diplomat that the 'boundaries [with Jordan] will be changed by war', unless some form of political settlement, involving an Israeli-Palestinian confederation, was reached.[23]

Such talk in the IDG General Staff was not limited to Dayan. For example, in late 1953 Lieutenant-Colonel Mattityahu Peled (IDF Quartermaster-General in 1967 and a left-wing Knesset Member in the 1970s) also proposed such a course. According to acting Prime Minister Sharett, Peled implied that the IDF regarded the border with Jordan as 'absolutely impossible' and wanted it changed to a 'straight line' and was 'aiming for a war in order to conquer the rest of western Palestine [i.e. the West Bank]'.[24]

Of course, the IDF General Staff, while highly influential, did not determine government policy. Nor did Herut, in opposition throughout 1949-56, or Ahdut Ha`Avoda, in opposition until November 1955 and only a minor member of the governing coalition thereafter. The ruling Mapai Party never adopted a platform advocating the conquest of the West Bank and neither of Mapai's leaders, Ben-Gurion and Sharett, ever proposed or spoke publicly about the need to conquer the West Bank (though Ben-Gurion in private occasionally proposed conquest of parts of the West Bank as an anti-infiltration measure).

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[21] Dayan's barely veiled advocacy of conquest of the West Bank triggered the following response from Foreign Minister Sharett: 'The State of Israel will not support military adventurism with the aim of conquering territory and expanding . . . . But if the Arabs in their foolishness and malignness will bring about such a situation, wherein Israel could expand its border . . . the matter will have to be weighed' (both quotes from 'Meeting of the Ministers of Israel', 7-23 July 1950, ISA FM 2463/2).

[22] W. C. Burdett (Jerusalem) to State Dept., 16 June 1949, NA RG 59, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified Records 1949, 321.9—Israel-Transjordan. Burdett commented that Dayan was 'as usual extremely frank and outspoken', and attributed this to the general's 'position and personal relationship to members of government [i.e. Ben-Gurion]'.

[23] S. R. Tyler jun. (Jerusalem) to SecState, 29 Sept. 1952, NA RG 59, State Dept. Records, LM 59, Palestine and Israel, International Affairs, Roll 1.

[24] M. Sharrett, *Yoman Ishi* (Tel Aviv, 1978), i. 80-1, entry for 26 Oct. 1953.

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Rumblings of a Second Round[25] served throughout the early and mid-1950s as an ominous background to the persistent small-scale Israeli-Arab clashes that dominated the foreground. Indeed, the clashes—between Israelis and infiltrators, and between IDF and Arab troops—fuelled these rumblings, serving both as additional cause for all-out war and as small-scale models for the violence to come.

From the first, Arab hostility to Israel manifested itself in non-recognition, a blockade of Israel's borders to all traffic and goods, a comprehensive economic boycott,[26] constant propaganda warfare, often marked by anti-Semitism as well as anti-Zionism, and occasional military attacks on Israeli civilians and soldiers. To these were soon added the closure of the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping and to goods to and from Israel in other-country vessels, and the closure of the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. Thus, almost from the first, Arab behaviour fed Israeli fears of a Second Round.

Israel and Jordan, 1948-1951

But, initially, perhaps, the slide towards a Second Round was not inevitable. During 1948-1950/1 there had been a number of opportunities for peace-making; the conflict had not yet hardened into the patterns of border clash and retaliatory strike, terrorism and war, charge and counter-charge that came to characterize the following years and decades. On both sides there was, among at least some of the leaders, a will to make peace and (an admittedly more limited) readiness and ability to make the necessary concessions to achieve it. A will and efforts to achieve peace featured in Israeli-Jordanian, Israeli-Syrian, and Israeli-Egyptian relations during these years.

Nowhere was the will to make peace more obvious and genuine than in the person of King `Abdullah.[27] In 1947-8, he had sought to avoid war via

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[25] On Second Round rumblings, see, e.g., 'Memorandum of Conversation' (Eban, Dayan, Byroade, and Burdett), 16 July 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5, 611.84a/7-1654; 'Memorandum of Conversation' (Prime Minister Sharett, Defence Minister Lavon, E. Lawson (US ambassador to Tel Aviv), G. Allen (US assistant secretary of state-designate for Near East, South Asia, and African Affairs), etc., 7 Dec. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5. Lt.-Col. M. Gihon and Capt. M. Avidan, both of IDF intelligence, in Feb. 1953 suggested that Israel's retaliatory policy could 'even lead to a "Second Round"' ('The Infiltration into Israel in 1952 and the Recent Tension (Dec. 1952-Jan. 1953) along the Borders', protocol of meeting on 4 Feb. 1953 of IDF and FM intelligence executives, unsigned and undated, ISA FM 2402/12.

[26] The Arab boycott had its foundation in Arab League declarations and measures adopted in 1946 against trading with the Yishuv.

[27] Even Ben-Gurion, normally an extreme sceptic about the sincerity and peace-mindedness of Arab leaders, told American journalist Kenneth Bilby, of the New York *Herald Tribune*, at the end of 1948: 'I believe in `Abdullah's sincerity. I think he really wants peace' (quoted in A. Shlaim, *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (New York, 1988), 353).

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a quiet partition of Palestine between Jordan and the Jewish state. Without doubt, the King—who recognized the Jews' military prowess and coveted the West Bank—preferred a Jewish state to a Husayni-led Palestinian state as his neighbour. A limited understanding about mutual non-belligerency had been achieved in meetings between `Abdullah and Golda Myerson (Meir), the sometime director of the Jewish Agency Political Department, in November 1947 and May 1948. But the unresolved problem of Jerusalem and the plight of the city's Jewish population, Arab pressures on `Abdullah, and Jewish strategic thinking led to a series of indecisive Haganah/IDF-Arab Legion battles in and around the city. Almost all the actions were initiated by the Haganah/IDF, and `Abdullah came to view the Jewish offensives as contrary to the understandings he had reached with Myerson.

During and following the armistice negotiations, `Abdullah and the Israelis renewed secret contacts with a view to a peace settlement. `Abdullah, according to Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett, who met the King on 5 May 1949, was eager to make peace. Sharett reported:

> Transjordan [i.e. Jordan] said—we are ready for peace immediately. We said—of course, we too want peace, but we cannot run, we have to walk . . . . [Transjordan:] First we must establish peace. To this we replied again: it is not possible to run, we must learn to walk first.[28]

`Abdullah sought Israeli agreement to a substantial measure of refugee repatriation and, initially (late 1948-early 1949), to a return of Arab control in Jaffa, Lydda, and Ramle, towns earmarked by the 1947 UN General Assembly partition resolution for the Palestine Arab state. Israel rejected the Jordanian demands and, for its own part, sought slices of Jordanian-controlled land at Latrun and around Jerusalem. The negotiations stalled. By the end of 1949 Jordan had whittled down its major demands to a two-kilometre wide corridor to the Mediterranean, with a desperately needed outlet along the Gaza-Ashkelon coast. Israel at first agreed to a corridor 50-100 metres wide but later apparently thought better of it. Despairing of a peace treaty, `Abdullah then proposed a five-year non-belligerency agreement. Israel agreed, with reservations (a draft was even initialled by senior Jordanian and Israeli officials), but Amman, under strong external and internal Arab pressures, then suspended the negotiations. Ben-Gurion, by February 1951, had in any case become lukewarm about the negotiation with Jordan;[29] `Abdullah, for his part, felt

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[28] *DFPI*, iv. 68 ('M. Sharett's Address at a Meeting of the Heads of Divisions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Tel Aviv, May 25, 1949)').

[29] Shlaim, *Collusion*, 590-1, and I. Rabinovich, I., *HaShalom SheHamak* (Jerusalem, 1991), 102-3, both citing and quoting Ben-Gurion's diary entries for 7 and 13 Feb. 1951. Ben-Gurion argued that Jordan was not a natural or stable entity; a settlement with Jordan might hamper reaching a settlement with Egypt; and: 'Do we have an interest in committing ourselves to such ridiculous borders?'

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unable to overrule his successive cabinets, which had become largely Palestinian. As Geoffrey Furlonge, the head of the British Foreign Office's Eastern' Department, put it in April 1951:

> However much King Abdullah may want an accommodation, he does not seem to control his government and subjects as he did in the past, and we imagine that he cannot afford to disregard the hostility which a premature settlement with Israel would arouse both among his own people and in the other Arab States.[30]

And, indeed, he could not. On 20 July 1951 `Abdullah was assassinated in Jerusalem by a Palestinian nationalist.[31] He had felt unable to conclude a separate peace with Israel without obtaining major concessions, primarily territorial. But Israel was wedded to its conquests and was in no mood to make such concessions. Tel Aviv was both drunk with victory and vastly angry with the Arabs for forcing so protracted and costly a war upon the Yishuv only three years after the end of the Holocaust in Europe, in which 6,000,000 Jews had been murdered.

Largely unattuned to the Arab world, Israel's leaders in 1948-50 were certain that, within a few years, the Arabs would bow to the realities of Israeli power and Arab weakness, and make peace. As Sharett recalled in 1957: 'We all lived [in 1948-50] with the belief that peace was just around the corner; that there was, in the Arab world, an acquiescence in the *fait accompli*; that it was only a matter of time, and not much time, a few years [before the Arabs agreed to peace].'[32]

There were other reasons, too, for Israel's relative lack of eagerness to make peace in the immediate aftermath of 1948, some vitally linked to Ben-Gurion's unwillingness to cede territory. By mid-1949 the new state was focusing most of its energy and resources on absorbing the mass Jewish immigration and establishing settlements (for which the conquered territory was necessary); creating and consolidating the infrastructure of statehood; and cementing relations with Diaspora Jewry and the world. The Arabs and the Arab problem could wait, as Ben-Gurion told Kenneth Bilby of the New York *Herald Tribune* in July 1949: 'I am prepared to get up in the middle of the night in order to sign a peace agreement—but I am not in a hurry and I can wait ten years. We are under no pressure whatsoever.'[33]

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[30] G. Furlonge to H. Dow, 2 Apr. 1951, quoted in W. R. Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, the United States, and Postwar Imperialism* (Oxford, 1984), 582.

[31] The best study of the Israeli-Jordanian peace negotiations is Shlaim, *Collusion*. Rabinovich, *HaShalom*, devotes an unsatisfactory, apologetic chapter to the talks. An earlier study (D. Schueftan, *Optziya Yardenit: Yisrael, Yarden VeHaPalestinim* (Israel, 1986) is good as far as it goes—but is based on insufficient documentation.

[32] M. Sharett, 'Yisrael Ve`Arav—Milhama VeShalom', *Ot*, Sept. 1966 (an excerpt from a speech given at Beit Berl, Oct.-Nov. 1957).

[33] Quoted in Shlaim, *Collusion*, 465.

The armistice agreements had given Israel relative tranquillity and recognized (if unfinalized) frontiers. Peace treaties, obtainable (if at all) only at the cost of major territorial concessions, were, therefore, extravagant superfluities. Ben-Gurion cited Abba Eban, Israel's representative to the United Nations, saying:

> [Eban] sees no need to run after peace. The armistice [agreements] are sufficient for us. If we run after peace—the Arabs will demand of us a price—borders [i.e. territorial concessions] or refugees [i.e. Arab refugee repatriation] or both. We will wait a few years.[34]

Elias Sasson, a senior Israeli Foreign Ministry official (and, later, a Cabinet minister), reported despairingly from Lausanne: 'the Jews believe that it is possible to achieve peace without [paying] any price, maximal or minimal.'[35]

And if Israel was unwilling to pay the price which might have paved the path to peace, the Arab rulers and regimes, while often (or, as in `Abdullah's case, even consistently) willing, ultimately appeared unable to deliver the goods. When it came to the crunch, they proved incapable of withstanding the pressure of other, more hardline Arab politicians and regimes, and the popular groundswell within their countries of antagonism towards Israel.

Thus, the fusion of Israeli inflexibility and Arab disunity, hesitancy, and weakness—the first certainly fuelling the second—undermined every possibility of peace, almost as soon as it materialized, between 1948 and 1951. `Abdullah's chief of general staff (CGS) during those years, General Glubb, put it well:

> The King's attempted negotiations with Israel failed, for two reasons. The first was the intense agitation raised by the other members of the Arab League, which frightened the [Jordanian] Government . . . . The second reason was that the Israelis, though apparently desirous of peace, wanted it only on their own terms. They were not prepared to make adequate concessions. King `Abdullah realized that, if he were to make peace, he would have to be able to show substantial advantages therefrom. With Israel unprepared to make concessions, there was little inducement to defy the other Arab countries.[36]

`Abdullah had felt that he could carry his own people and defy the Arab League, 'if I could justify a peace by pointing to concessions made by the Jews. But without any concession from them I am defeated before I even start.'[37]

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[34] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 14 July 1949, BGA. Ben-Gurion often quoted his interlocutors in his diary when they expressed his own thinking.

[35] E. Sasson (Lausanne) to Z. Zeligson (Shmuel Divon), 16 June 1949, ISA FM 3749/2.

[36] Glubb, *Soldier*, 258. Glubb failed to mention here the internal Jordanian-Palestinian opposition that `Abdullah encountered in his peace policy.

[37] Quoted in Shlaim, *Collusion*, 604.

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The Za`im Peace Overture, Spring 1949

On 30 March 1949 Colonel Husni Za`im, the commander of the Syrian army, took power in Damascus in a bloodless *coup d`état*. On 14 August Za`im was himself overthrown—and executed—in a military *coup*. Between those two dates, Israel and Syria, following Jordan's lead, signed an armistice agreement (20 July), and Za`im proposed a 'separate' peace settlement and attempted to embark on peace negotiations with Israel. He got nowhere.

In mid-April, shortly after the start of the Israeli-Syrian armistice negotiations, Za`im, through emissaries, proposed a meeting with Ben-Gurion and the negotiation of a peace settlement. He wanted—in the words of an American diplomat—a process of 'give and take provided he [was] not . . . asked to give all while [the] other side takes all'. Za`im offered to absorb 250,000-300,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria, with the West paying for their resettlement and for development projects along the Euphrates.[38] In return, Israel was asked to agree that the new Israeli-Syrian frontier would run down the middle of the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee[39] rather than follow the recognized international frontier between British Mandate Palestine and Syria, which ran along the east bank of the Jordan River and slightly to the east of the Sea of Galilee— leaving both inside Israel. Za`im's proposal meant that, while Syria would withdraw from the salient it had occupied in 1948 west of the Jordan at Mishmar HaYarden, it would receive, in exchange for peace (and the salient), the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee (the `Ein Gev-Ha`on strip) and half the waters of the river and the lake.

Ben-Gurion flatly refused to meet Za`im (as he also, at one point, refused to meet King `Abdullah), and rejected any concession of territory or water resources. Syria, he said, must first recognize the old international frontier, withdraw from the salient, and sign an armistice agreement. Afterwards, Israel and Syria could hold peace talks. In an angry cable to Washington, the US Minister in Damascus concluded:

> Unless Israel can be brought to understand that it cannot have all of its cake (partition boundaries) and gravy as well (area captured in violation of truce, Jerusalem and resettlement of Arab refugees elsewhere) it may find it has won Pal[estine] war but lost peace. It should be evident that Israel's continued insistence

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[38] In early June, Za`im even spoke of his readiness to absorb 'one half million refugees' ('Report on Recent Trip of Emmett Gulley', Gaza, 10 June 1949, AFSCA, Foreign Service 1949 Palestine).

[39] J. H. Keeley (Damascus) to State Dept., 28 Apr. 1949, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified Records 1949, 350—Syria: Secret and Confidential. The US Minister to Damascus concluded: 'If Ben-Gurion would meet Za`im half way, another KEMAL-VENIZELOS love feast might well bring "peace in our time" to Middle East.'

upon her pound of flesh and more is driving Arab states slowly (and perhaps surely) to gird their loins (politically and economically if not yet militarily) for long range struggle.[40]

Ben-Gurion's response sealed the fate of the Za`im initiative. Weeks passed without any progress; opponents of the initiative in Damascus, led by Syrian Foreign Minister Adel Arslan, began to raise objections; and, as his room for manœuvre evaporated, Za`im's enthusiasm for peace waned.[41] The armistice agreement, which met most of Israel's territorial demands, including Syrian withdrawal from the salient, was signed on 20 July. A belated Israeli effort at the end of the month to revive the peace contacts came to nothing and two weeks later Za`im was dead.

Israel's leaders may have suspected that Za`im's proposals were merely a ploy to win territory and water resources, and that he had never been 'serious' or 'sincere'. Ben-Gurion certainly regarded Za`im with suspicion, not least because, for months if not years, Za`im had been an Israeli intelligence (and CIA) asset and may have been in Israeli pay.[42] How could such a man be trusted? Ben-Gurion, expressing his 'strong dislike and suspicion of Za`im', even characterized the Syrian leader as a 'little Mussolini.'[43] Yet Ben-Gurion acknowledged that Za`im 'for some reason . . . wants good relations with us'.[44]

But, of course, it was not Za`im's sincerity or seriousness that was the paramount consideration in the minds of Israel's leaders. These could easily have been put to the test—by embarking on serious negotiations, agreeing to make at least some of the concessions demanded, and seeing whether, in fact, Za`im then agreed to sign a separate peace. Jerusalem, had it wished to, could easily have called Za`im's 'bluff', if it was one. The problem lay elsewhere, in the realm of territory and water resources, which Israel did not wish to concede. Sharett clearly expressed Israeli thinking about the Za`im proposals when he instructed his diplomats to avoid

any promise or hint of [a] possible promise . . . of a change in the border between Palestine and Syria and along the Jordan and the [Galilee and Hula] lakes . . . . On the contrary, it should be clear to the other side that under no circumstances can such a change be contemplated. On the other hand, the Syrian delegation

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[40] Keeley to State Dept., 19 May 1949, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified Records 1949, 321.9—Israel-Transjordan.

[41] Keeley to State Dept., 2 June 1949, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified Records 1949, 321.9—Israel-Syria, Secret and Confidential.

[42] A. Shlaim, 'Husni Zaim and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Syria', *Middle East Focus*, 9/2 (fall 1986), 26-31.

[43] J. McDonald (Tel Aviv) to SecState, 16 May 1949, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified Records 1949, 321.9—Israel-Syria, Secret and Confidential.

[44] Quoted in Rabinovich, *HaShalom*, 69.

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should be encouraged to think about a large-scale absorption of [Palestinian] refugees.[45]

As in the negotiations with `Abdullah, the Israeli leaders were remarkably single-minded and rigid. All thought of territorial concessions, or other important compromise, was bluntly rejected. Again, there was the conviction that the Arabs would eventually agree to talk and to make peace without obtaining such concessions. Meanwhile, armistice agreements were sufficient.[46]

Israeli-Egyptian Contacts 1948-1952

While throughout the 1949-56 period the Israeli leadership regarded Egypt as the key to Israeli-Arab peace—'where Egypt went, the rest would follow'[47]—there were no serious Israeli-Egyptian peace talks or overtures to parallel the Israeli-`Abdullah negotiations or the Za`im proposals between the 1948 war and July 1952.

But a number of contacts did take place in which Egyptian interest in a separate peace with Israel, on certain conditions, had at least been intimated. Even before the start of the Israeli-Egyptian armistice talks, Egypt has sent out peace feelers, first in September and then in October-November 1948. Ben-Gurion chose either to ignore or to reject them outright, viewing them as ploys designed to deflect or defer planned IDF offensives against the Egyptian army. But the Israeli premier failed to bring them to the Cabinet's attention, nor did he solicit ministerial views (other than Sharett's) in the matter, and nothing came of these overtures, which may or may not have been 'sincere'.[48]

Following the signing of the armistice agreement, Israeli and Egyptian diplomats met repeatedly to discuss possible peace arrangements. Egypt's terms were consistent and clear: retention of the Gaza Strip and the cession by Israel of all or substantial parts of the Negev Desert to Egypt in order to create territorial continuity between the Arab West (Egypt) and the Arab East (Jordan), a continuity that Israel's establishment (or, rather, the British conquest of Palestine from the Turks) had severed. Israel responded by refusing to part with 'an inch' of the Negev[49]—effectively ending the talks.

The Egyptian and Israeli positions were reiterated in essence at an Israeli-Egyptian meeting in late February 1950. Egypt wanted the southern

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[45] *DFPI* iv. 245.

[46] For the Za`im peace episode, see also Y. Nimrod, *Mifgash BaTzomet* (Haifa, 1985), 145-52; and A. Shalev, *Shituf-Pe`ula BeTzel 'Imut: Mishtar Shvitat-HaNeshek Yisrael-Suria 1949-1955* (Tel Aviv, 1989), 56-63.

[47] Rabinovich, *HaShalom*, 102.

[48] Shlaim, *Collusion*, 315-20,346-8; Rabinovich, *HaShalom*, 150-2.

[49] Ibid. 155-8.

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Negev: 'If Israel wanted peace, she must pay the price.'[50] But Israel refused any territorial concession. A last series of contacts, in February-March 1952, also yielded nothing. Israel, according to Eban, regarded the whole of the Negev as crucial, but was willing to allow Egypt certain rights of passage through Israeli territory within the framework of a bilateral peace settlement. Again, no progress was achieved.[51]

Periodically, through 1949-52, there were secret Israeli-Egyptian contacts in which peace was discussed, but neither side changed its terms. Israel always doubted Egypt's sincerity and its ability to deliver. But there always remained a basic unwillingness on Israel's part even to contemplate any substantial concessions in exchange for peace. The contacts and feelers of September 1948-July 1952 were never pursued far enough for Israel to discover whether the Egyptians were serious. So, as with the negotiations with Jordan and the Za`im initiative, the contacts with Egypt came to nought.

A 'Missed' Peace?

Did Israel miss a real chance of peace with one or more of its neighbours in the years following 19487 Available Israeli and Western documentation offers no clear answer. Perhaps the opening of Arab state archives would cast light on the sincerity of the Arab leaders involved. Only then may it be possible to determine whether there was sufficient sincerity, flexibility, and determination on both sides. For the moment, all that can be said is that the Israeli leadership, with Ben-Gurion setting the tone, was neither sufficiently enthusiastic nor determined enough in the pursuit of peace, and that Israel was unwilling to make those substantial concessions that alone might have tempted Arab leaders such as `Abdullah and Za`im to take the plunge.[52] Whether the Arab leaders would then have responded and whether any agreements reached would have lasted, is a matter for conjecture.[53]

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[50] Rabinovich, *HaShalom*, 159-60.

[51] Ibid. 171.

[52] Whether Israel's leaders *should* have made the concessions is another matter and falls outside the purview of this book.

[53] The matter remains hotly debated among Israeli historians. Traditional Israeli historiography, the 'old historiography', maintains simply that Israel was always interested in peace, and willing to make concessions to achieve it, but that the Arabs, one and all, were bent only on Israel's destruction. Although the opening of the Israeli and Western archives has made this position untenable, a new school of 'official' Israeli historians—perhaps 'new old historians'?—has arisen which asserts that no peace was missed and no peace was ever possible. `Abdullah was simply too weak to sign or to carry through on a peace agreement with Israel (Rabinovich, *HaShalom*, 126, 142), and Za`im was an insincere, untrustworthy adventurer, and, had he signed an agreement with Israel, it would have fared 'more like the [unimplemented] Israeli-Lebanese agreement of May 1983 than the Camp David accords' (ibid. 92-3). M. B. Oren has written of Israeli-Egyptian relations: 'Peace . . . was never a

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An enlightening (and, perhaps, unconsciously wry) postscript to the whole issue of the 'missed' peace during 1949-52 was afforded by Ben-Gurion in a Knesset address in August 1952:

> All my life down to today—as a Zionist and a Jew—I regarded peace and understanding with the Arabs as a basic and primary value . . . . I would regard it as a grievous sin not only against our generation but also against the coming generations were we not to do everything possible in order to reach mutual understanding with our Arab neighbours and were the coming generations able to blame the Israeli government with missing any opportunity whatsoever for peace . . . . I would not want to be the person that our grandchildren or our great-grandchildren would charge with having missed, at some point, a possible chance for Israeli-Arab peace.[54]

In the absence of a quick peace, patterns of intractability, antagonism and hostility gradually won the day, setting the Middle East on an inexorable course of war and conflict during the following four decades.

The Great Powers and the Middle East Conflict, 1949-1952

American policies in the Middle East were governed from 1945-7 onwards by an admixture of the strategic, the ideological, the political, the economic, and the sentimental. The Middle East, traditionally the bridge between south-eastern Europe and Asia, and southern Asia and Africa, and now the source of much, if not most, of the world's oil, was seen as an important battleground of ideological and political conflict with an expansionist Communism that had to be contained.

The United States sought to protect its interests and consolidate its position in the region by establishing and maintaining good relations with the emergent Arab states. It did not seek permanent military footholds or bases, and remained chary of defence pacts and commitments, preferring

(Footnote continued from previous page)

real possibility at any time in the period 1949-1956' ('Secret Egypt-Israel Peace Initiatives Prior to the Suez Campaign', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 26/3 (July 1990), 351-70). Both these historians concede that Israel was unwilling to make substantial concessions (Rabinovich, 142; Oren, 365) but claim that peace was missed mainly because of the Arabs. As Oren (p. 365) puts it: 'On balance—and despite Israel's intransigence on the territorial and demographic issues—the responsibility for the failure of peace rests largely with Egypt.'

[54] *Divrei HaKnesset*, 12/2 (19 Aug. 1952), 3020. Israel's position was still the same in 1955: 'Israel will not discuss a peace involving the concession of any piece of territory. The neighbouring states do not deserve an inch of Israel's land . . . We are ready for peace in exchange for peace' (Ben-Gurion to Sharett (New York), 4 Dec. 1955, ISA FM 2455/4). Sharett's views were, apparently, no different: 'Israel will refuse to concede any part of its territory in order to satisfy the aspirations of the Arab States' (quoted in M. Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza: Mediniyut HaBitahon VeHaHutz shel Medinat Yisrael, 1955-1957* (Tel Aviv, 1992), 118).

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political and economic ties. But, from the start, the fly in the ointment was Israel. American interests in the Middle East were 'being sabotaged by Israel', was how one pro-Arab lobbyist put it,[55] for Truman's decision (over the objections of the State Department, the Defence Department, and the oil lobby) to support the Jewish state had transformed the United States into Israel's foremost patron, a role that was a perpetual, painful thorn in the side of prospective US-Arab relations.

American support of Israel was grounded in feelings of justice, and of pity and guilt stemming from the Holocaust (the Jews needed and deserved a state); shared democratic (and anti-Communist) values; and American politicians' need of Jewish funding and Jewish votes (concentrated in some key electoral states, such as New York, Pennsylvania, and California). To this, over the years, was added the all-important factor of inertia and increasing vested interests. Once Israel was there, the idea of its ceasing to exist or of its destruction became anathema to most American politicians and officials. 'The American people', wrote Parker T. Hart, the director of the State Department's Office for Near Eastern Affairs, and no pro-Zionist, '. . . cannot be a party to new [Jewish] suffering on a large scale.' Israel would 'not be abandoned by the US'.[56]

Moreover, a certain circle in American policy-making came to regard Israel as something of a minor strategic asset in the global struggle against Communism (while, paradoxically, also viewing it as an obstacle in rallying Arab opinion and states against the Soviet Union). The IDF's swift victories in October-November 1948 and December 1948-January 1949 over the Egyptian army had demonstrated Israel's military predominance. In the global struggle, Israel was a useful military prop. Ostracizing Israel might well push it into the Soviet camp, reasoned US Under-Secretary of State Robert Lovett in January 1949.[57]

An early convert to this view was Sir Hugh Dow, the British consul-general in Jerusalem. In March 1949 he wrote to Whitehall that Washington's attitude towards Israel was not dictated 'only' by internal political considerations (i.e. Jewish votes and campaign contributions): the Americans were swayed by 'a logical line of reasoning. . . to the effect that a Jewish State in the Middle East is likely to prove a stronger bulwark against communism than can be formed by the Arab States.'[58]

At the same time, American policy rejected the idea of Israeli expansion beyond the 1948 borders, whatever the pretext or provocation, and sought Israeli concessions to facilitate Israeli-Arab peace.[59] The United States did

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[55] W. A. Eddy (Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO), Beirut) to P. T. Hart, Washington, 27 Sept. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5.

[56] Hart to Eddy, 22 June 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5.

[57] M. J. Cohen, *Truman and Israel* (New York, 1969), 271.

[58] Quoted in ibid. 273.

[59] Hart to Eddy, 29 Jan. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5.

not believe in the practicality of imposed solutions and felt that it should not interfere in the negotiations towards a settlement.[60]

Britain's primary aim in the Middle East during 1949-52 was to maintain good relations with the Arab world, relations badly shaken by the 1948 War and what most Arabs perceived as Britain's pro-Zionist posture. This aim was seen as essential to the preservation of two vital British interests—its Suez Canal-side bases and the free flow of Middle Eastern oil. The Canal was regarded as the British Empire's 'jugular vein';[61] and the bases, as its guardians and, more generally, as necessary props of British power in the region and as irreplaceable way stations to the Empire east of Suez.[62] Oil was necessary for running Britain's economy and fleet. Strategy was inseparable from economy; the Canal facilitated the flow of Persian Gulf oil to Britain and the distant points of Empire.[63]

Britain shunned overfriendly relations with Israel, fearful of undermining relations with the Arabs. Good relations with the Arab world were seen, by such men as Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, as important, even necessary, in combating Soviet expansion. None the less, in 1948-50 Britain normalized its relations with the Jewish state, regarding it, as did the United States, as a bulwark against Communism.

Britain was somewhat more cautious than the United States in promoting Arab-Israeli peace. While supporting peace, it remained keenly aware of the near-impossibility of achieving a comprehensive Middle Eastern settlement and of the likelihood (or, at least, possibility) that a separate peace between Israel and any of the Arab states might be detrimental to its own standing in the rest of the Arab world. For example, peace between King `Abdullah's Jordan and Israel, given prevailing alliances and inter-Arab rivalries, could well lead to accusations that Britain had (again) stabbed the Arab nation in the back.

On 25 May 1950, with a 'brooding lull' hanging over the Middle East, the United States, Britain, and France issued the Tripartite Declaration, hoping to exercise a 'restraining and stabilizing' influence upon the parties and the conflict, and prevent a Second Round. The declaration came exactly one month after King `Abdullah's 24 April annexation of the West Bank to Jordan—and can be seen, among other things, as a guarantee of

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[60] Hart to Eddy, 29 Jan. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5; D. Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York, 1970), 343.

[61] J. C. Hurewitz, 'The Historical Context', in W. R. Louis and R. Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956: The Crisis and its Consequences* (Oxford, 1989), 220.

[62] Furlonge, head of the FO Eastern Department, wrote in early 1951 that 'the strategic importance of the Suez Canal cannot be over-estimated . . . . We are seeking Egyptian goodwill, not for its own sake, but in order to secure [these] facilities' (Furlonge to Dow, 2 Apr. 1951, quoted in Louis, *British Empire*, 582).

[63] Louis, *British Empire*, 589.

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Jordan's new borders.[64] The three Powers more or less promised to keep Israeli and Arab arms acquisitions from the West within bounds, and to 'take action' against either side, should it embark on aggression or prepare to violate the agreed armistice lines.[65]

From the first, the Arab-Israeli conflict was viewed, at least in part, through the prism of the global struggle between East and West. The 1950s witnessed a succession of American, British, and Anglo-American plans to co-ordinate the 'defence of the Middle East' against a feared Soviet thrust into the region. By May 1950 the British Chiefs of Staff, thinking of a regional security system, regarded the 'ideal military arrangement' in the Middle East as consisting of a pact between Arab states, Israel, Turkey, Persia, and Greece—with the core being Egypt and Britain's canal-side bases.[66]

A year later, the Americans formally launched the idea of a 'Middle East Command' to protect the Free World's interests by drawing the region's states into a loose anti-Soviet alliance. Military aid was promised. The Command would provide 'depth' for the front-line Western Allies—Iran, Greece, and Turkey—where American and other NATO troops were stationed or would be sent in the event of Soviet aggression.

But, as the Americans were quick to discover, the conflicts within the region—between Israelis and Arabs and between the different Arab regimes—were far more 'vivid' (in Acheson's phrase) than the threat from the North. As developments revealed, the idea of the Command was stillborn in large measure because of the rupture in Egyptian-British relations occasioned by the disputes over the British military presence in the Suez Canal zone (which stretched to the suburbs of Cairo) and the condominium over Sudan. (Egypt wanted to retain the territory, which Britain had promised self-determination).

So long as the thorn of the British military presence was lodged in the side of Anglo-Egyptian relations, there was no way Egyptians could align with Britain in an anti-Soviet defence system. This applied equally to the Farouq regime and the post-July 1952 RCC. It was Egypt that delivered the *coup de grâce* to the Middle East Command in October 1951, when, apparently without even reading the proposal, Cairo shot it down—just two days before unilaterally abrogating the two basic agreements (Sudan and the Canal presence) which had been at the heart of Anglo-Egyptian relations.[67] Within weeks there were serious Egyptian-British clashes in the Zone. And on 26 January 1952—'Black Saturday'—the disturbances reached Cairo, with the Egyptian mobs destroying

[64] Ibid. 583,586.

[65] Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 516.

[66] Louis, *British Empire*, 583.

[67] Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 721-8.

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British property and symbols (Shepheard's Hotel) and murdering nine Britons.[68]

The plan for a Middle East Command was, in all essential aims and characteristics, resurrected three years later in the 'Northern Tier' plan or, as it was more formally known, the Baghdad Pact—and the Pact's history was closely to follow the Command's.

To judge from the available evidence, Western fears of Soviet penetration in the Middle East were premature. The Soviets in the early 1950s did not expend great energy or thought on the Middle East, and the Middle East was far from ripe for the picking. But the gradual radicalization of the Middle East, following the July 1952 revolution in Cairo and the Anglo-Egyptian clashes over Suez, led to renewed Soviet interest in the region. At the same time, Western efforts to set up the Middle East Command and, subsequently, the Baghdad Pact, alerted the Soviets to the threat of an anti-Soviet alliance along their southern border.

Following Stalin's death in March 1953, Moscow adopted a policy designed to extend its global influence through aid to Third World countries. In the Middle East, Soviet interest focused on Egypt. During 1953-4 Egypt and the Soviets drew closer after concluding major economic deals, despite clampdowns by the Nasserist regime on the Egyptian Communist Party. In early 1954 the Soviets vetoed two UN Security Council resolutions opposed by the Arabs—following years of neutrality at the United Nations in all that concerned the Israeli-Arab conflict. At the same time, an Egyptian delegation headed by Deputy War Minister Hassan Rajab visited Moscow and apparently discussed the possibility of acquiring Soviet arms.[69]

Britain and Jordan

The plans for a Middle East Command rested largely on existing bilateral accords and alliances between the Western Powers and individual Middle Eastern states. The most important of these alliances, in the context of this study, was between Britain and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (called 'Transjordan' before 1946-8). For both parties, the alliance proved problematic: Jordan's kings were happy to enjoy the political and military backing of a Great Power but found that this dependence laid them open to attack and subversion by Arab nationalists and republicans. Britain was happy to enjoy the use of bases in Jordan and the assistance (as during

[68] Churchill said of the murderous rampage: 'The horrible behaviour of the mob puts them lower than the most degraded savages now known' (quoted in Louis, *British Empire*, 747).

[69] Y. Ro`i, *From Encroachment to Involvement: A Documentary Study of Soviet Policy in the Middle East, 1945-1973* (New York, 1974), 111.

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the Second World War) of the Arab Legion, but was to find that its alliance with Amman undermined its standing in Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, and repeatedly threatened to suck it into hostilities with Israel.

In 1946, when Jordan became an independent state with `Abdullah—Emir (prince) of Transjordan since 1922—as its king, the country signed a treaty of alliance with Britain. The treaty permitted the British bases in the country and obliged them to defend Jordan if it were attacked. In March 1948 the treaty was modified to limit the British military presence to three sites. This increased Jordanian independence, but the Legion remained under British control, being officered, financed, and equipped by Britain. The 1948 war and Jordan's formal annexation of the West Bank in April 1950 complicated matters. Was Britain honour-bound to come to Jordan's aid in defence of the West Bank, or only if the East Bank was attacked? And, if the West Bank was included, what would constitute adequate grounds for British intervention—a full-fledged Israeli invasion or mere IDF incursions and limited attacks? A corollary to these questions was whether Britain was, indeed, *able*, given the paucity of its forces in Jordan and its dwindling military presence in the Middle East in general, to halt an Israeli invasion and conquest of the West Bank? Was Britain expected to go to war against Israel *after* it had defeated the Arab Legion and conquered the West Bank, in order to wrest the territory back for Jordan?

The period 1949-56, with its recurrent IDF retaliatory strikes against targets in the West Bank, continually raised the problem of the Anglo-Jordanian defence treaty. Israel periodically feared that this or that step might result in limited or full-scale Anglo-Israeli hostilities. Jordanian leaders repeatedly called for activation of the treaty and British intervention against Israel. Britain, as persistently, held back. It was politically unwilling and militarily unprepared to fight Israel. But it repeatedly threatened that it would intervene if Israel went too far. More than any other Great Power, Britain was apprehensive that Israeli-Jordanian border incidents could lead to a war in which it would become involved.

Britain was by no means critical only of Israel. A minority view at the Foreign Office, promoted by Glubb, held that infiltration, at least of the economic variety, was somehow excusable. But the dominant view was that infiltrations were illegal, inexcusable, and provocative, and that Jordan was responsible and must put an end to them.[70]

[70] See Furlonge to A. D. M. Ross, Eastern Dept., FO, 9 Mar. 1953, PRO FO 371-104779 ER 1091/82, in which the British Minister in Amman argued that infiltrations for 'robbery' or theft were not contraventions of the Israel-Jordan General Armistice Agreement (Article III (3)). Furlonge was taken to task by R. J. Bowker, FO, who referred to the armistice accord's Articles IV (2) and IV (3) and to their interpretation—which was binding under Article XI (8)—by IJMAC, which found that infiltration for any purpose was a breach of the agreement (Bowker to Furlonge, 16 Mar. 1953, and Bowker to Furlonge, 23 Apr. 1953, both in PRO FO 371-104779).

Whitehall hoped that the mere threat of British intervention would suffice to contain Israel; that it would refrain from a major assault on the West Bank or from any attack at all on the East Bank; and that Britain would not be compelled to march. But Britain's dilemma became agonizingly acute in the second half of 1956, when Israel mounted a series of major raids on Jordanian police and army bases just at the time when Britain and France (and France's ally, Israel) were preparing a joint attack on Egypt. In the end, a British-Israeli clash was avoided and, instead, the two countries went to war together against Egypt. But a spin-off of that war and of the resultant anti-British groundswell throughout the Middle East, was Jordan's unilateral abrogation of its treaty with Britain in March 1957.

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2
The Emergence and Nature of Arab Infiltration into Israel

The Emergence of the Infiltration Problem

The 1948 war left in its wake not only a refugee problem but also an infiltration problem. Each year between 1949 and 1956, thousands of Palestinian Arabs illegally crossed the border into Israel from Jordan's West Bank, the Egyptian-controlled Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula, Lebanon, and Syria. In 1952, when the marauding peaked, the IDF recorded some 16,000 cases of infiltration—over 11,000 along the Jordanian-Israeli border alone, and some 5,000 along the frontier with Egypt.[1] Israel police figures show a gradual drop after 1952, to '7,018' in 1953, '4,638' in 1954,[2] '4,351' in 1955, and '2,786' in the first four months of 1956.[3] No doubt, many infiltrations went completely unnoticed and unrecorded.[4].

[1]'The Infiltration into Israel in 1952 and the Recent Tension (Dec. 1952-Jan. 1953) along the Borders', protocol of meeting on 4 Feb. 1953 of IDF and FM intelligence executives, unsigned and undated, ISA FM 2402/12. The Israel police put the infiltration total for 1952 somewhat lower, variously at '6,673' ('Infiltration—Annual Survey, 1.1.52-31.12.52', Israel Police Special Branch/Section for Combating Infiltration, undated but with covering note, A. (or E.) Katznelenbogen to IDF General Staff/Operations, 3 Mar. 1953, ISA FM 2402/12), and '9,342' ('Infiltration—A Survey of the Problems of Infiltration into Israel in 1954', M. Novick, Israel Police Special Branch, June 1955, CZA S92-11). But the police statistics for 1952 were based mainly on police encounters with and tracking of infiltrators. The IDF often failed to inform the police of its encounters with infiltrators. Glubb put the infiltration total across the Jordanian-Israeli border in 1952 at '11,500' ('A Note on Refugee Vagrancy', Gen. Glubb, end Feb. 1953, PRO FO 371-104778).

[2] 'Infiltration—A Survey', Novick, CZA S92-11. Again, the police statistics probably exclude many infiltrations monitored only by the IDF.

[3] Monthly reports on infiltration by Novick, CZA S92-11.

[4] The serious problems involved in arriving at accurate figures for annual infiltration totals are paralleled by problems with most statistical aspects of the infiltration issue during 1949-56. These relate to the numbers of infiltrations, the ratio between the different types of infiltration, the numbers of infiltrators killed, wounded, and captured, the numbers of Israelis killed and wounded by infiltrators, and so on. The most problematic period is 1948-50/1, when no Israeli agency systematically compiled statistics. But there are also severe problems for 1952-6, when statistics were compiled, both by the IDF and the Israel police. Many documents are unavailable or have been lost. Secondly, there are contradictions and discrepancies between IDF, police, and, sometimes, FM figures. Some of the discrepancies stem from the fact that the police and IDF for years tabulated only infiltrations its own men had encountered. Thirdly, the available reports almost invariably present problems of categorization. Police reports usually break down the infiltrations into 'criminal' and 'noncriminal', with no further breakdown of the 'criminal'. Thus, there is no way of knowing

(Footnote continued on next page)

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Some Israeli officials, trying to explain the persistence of the infiltration phenomenon during the 1950s, linked it to the bedouin life-style and to the urbanization and pauperization that had drawn or pushed thousands of rural Arabs to Palestine's burgeoning towns during Ottoman and British Mandate rule. Perhaps as many as 200,000 Arabs had moved, between 1930 and 1945, from the desert to the prospering coastal areas of Palestine and Lebanon. Israel's relative prosperity continued to exert a magnetic power.[5]

But the majority of observers looked to more specific and recent causes. The infiltration problem was, and was immediately understood to be, closely bound up with the refugee problem: many of the infiltrators were refugees, former inhabitants of Arab villages and towns in the areas that had become the Jewish State.[6]

The mass exodus of Arabs from Palestine by summer 1948 had severed some 300,000-400,000 people from their native land, homes, fields, and family members who had been left behind. Many left behind ripening or ripe crops. The summer harvest of 1948 was both the cause and the

(Footnote continued from previous page)

whether a 'criminal' infiltrator caught in Mar. 1953 had crossed the border to kill, steal, or pick oranges. IDF reports often used completely different categories. Nor is the categorization problem restricted to the types of infiltration. IDF and police reports do not usually differentiate between IDF personnel and civilians killed and wounded by infiltrators, and there is often no differentiation between IDF soldiers killed and wounded on the Israeli side of the border and those killed in Arab territory. Similarly, the reports do not often differentiate between Israelis killed by infiltrators and those killed by Arab soldiers. Police, IDF, and FM reports frequently differ over the number of Israelis killed by infiltrators in a given month or year. (Complaining of one such discrepancy, regarding the number of Israelis killed by infiltrators in 1952 ('69' or '59'), an Israeli FM official commented: 'Ten people were resurrected' between two reports (G. Rafael to foreign minister, 31 Dec. 1953, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph).) Problems of categorization also plague reports of infiltrators killed, wounded, or captured by the IDF, the police, or Israeli border settlers. What type of infiltrators were they and who—IDF, police, or Israeli civilians—killed, wounded, or captured them? (The reports often vary, sometimes wildly, about the actual number of infiltrators killed each month or year.) There are also serious statistical problems in everything concerning the economic harm done by infiltration. There is no proper tabulation of indirect costs, and the tabulations of direct losses due to damage and theft are often unsystematic and contradictory. I have tried, through cross-checking and the application of judgement, to make what I consider reasonable assessments.

[5] 'The Situation along the Israel-Jordan Border and Proposals to Ameliorate It', Y. Palmon, undated, but with covering note, B. Yekutieli to Rafael, 25 Feb. 1954, ISA PMO 5433/23. See also 'Arab Infiltration into Israel', ed. 2;. Ne'eman, Israel Foreign Ministry Research Dept., 10 July 1952, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph.

[6] An early, perceptive understanding of this linkage, as well as of the motivation behind the infiltration, was expressed by the head of the IDF's Operations Dept., Lt.-Col. S. Avidan:

The infiltration problem will exist so long as (*A*) Palestinian refugees exist in the Arab states neighbouring Israel. . . (*B*). . . there are economic straits in the Arab areas of the country [i.e. Palestine]—the main motive of the infiltration; (*C*) . . . the problem of the re-settlement of the refugees in the neighbouring countries is not solved ('On the Infiltration', Avidan to IDF commands (Northern, Central, etc.), Israel police, etc., 11 Mar. 1949, IDFA $\frac{2519\backslash 50}{14}$).

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focus of the first wave of Palestinian infiltration into Israeli-held territory. Large-scale infiltration began in early June 1948 and grew steadily during the weeks of the First Truce (11 June-8 July), when the front lines were largely quiet.

Both rural and urban refugees almost immediately began to feel the bite of privations, including hunger. And the places in which they initially settled were almost all no more than three or four hours' walk from their abandoned homes, villages, and towns, and some were much nearer.

In June 1948 thousands of refugees crossed the lines to retrieve possessions or reap crops; some apparently merely wanted a glimpse of their abandoned homes. Even before the start of the First Truce, Haganah intelligence reported that 'many refugees are living in Wadi Korn [on the Lebanese border] . . . At night they wander to the area of the villages conquered by us to collect clothes and food.'[7] A local kibbutznik noted that the refugees, threatened by hunger, had to brave IDF fire when they crossed the lines to forage for food.[8]

In the Hula Valley refugees from across the border with Syria made nightly crop-reaping sorties, driven by 'the daily worsening economic situation', and there were exchanges of fire between IDF pickets and 'Arab reapers. In one of the recent shooting incidents, an Arab and two horses were killed.' Most came to reap; some 'irrigated their fields [at night]. . . in the hope that they would manage to plant vegetables [which would be ripe] when they returned to their village with the [inauguration of] the ceasefire'.[9]

A graphic description, from the Arab side, of the large-scale crop-oriented infiltration of the summer of 1948 was given years later by Elias Shoufani, a refugee from the Western Galilee village of Mi'ilya. Food was

> scanty . . . . The lure of food was irresistible . . . . The trickle of individuals who began to infiltrate across enemy lines in June became a largescale nightly operation in August. Every day. . . long columns of farmers led their donkeys to the vicinity of the village watching posts and waited impatiently for the sun to set. With nightfall, they made their way through the curving valleys to the plains. All night long they cropped millet from the fields of Kabri and Zib [i.e. two abandoned Arab villages]. Before dawn, they loaded the night's crop on their donkeys and returned homer[10]

A similar situation prevailed, even before the signing of the Israel-Egypt

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[7] Haganah Intelligence Service (*Sha''i*), Arab Dept., daily report (*yediot tene/ayin*), 4 June 1948, KMA-PA 100/MOD/3-193.

[8] *`Alei Manara* (Kibbutz Manara bulletin), No. 65 (4 June 1948), LA 235/IV, 1630.

[9] 'Tsur' to Haganah Intelligence Service, 7 June 1948, ISA FM 2570/6. See also 'BaTziburiyut Ha`Aravit (in the Arab Public)', 11 June 1948, Foreign Ministry Research Dept./ Middle East Affairs Dept., ISA FM 2570/6.

[10] E. Shoufani, 'The Fall of a Village', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 1/4 (1972), 108-21.

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General Armistice Agreement (24 February 1949), along the Gaza Strip border, where, beginning in January 1949, the senior Quaker representative in the Strip reported:

> the [Gaza] people who had fields in no-man's land . . . have, from sheer desperation, plowed. . . as close to the Jewish lines as it was possible to go . . . . In doing so, they braved the very determined efforts of the Jews. . . to keep that land clear . . . . In the efforts, the Jews have shot and killed various men, women, cows, sheep, camels, donkeys and so forth.[11]

Another Quaker stationed in Gaza reported that

> a drive north from the little village of Jabaliya . . . revealed two streams of people—going toward former homes [in Israel] and returning to the wretched cave, tent or hovel in and south of Gaza most of the refugees have called home since they fled [Palestine] last year . . . . On [the old Egypt-Syria route] camel trains, numbering as many as twenty animals, were trudging along in the combination of comedy and disdain which camels always achieve. They swayed along, bearing loads of oranges and fresh vegetables through the green fields dotted with poppies. Women with their shawl-veils flowing about their shoulders, walked gracefully with a huge bunch of green stuff or twigs and branches balanced on their heads. The presence of mines was apparent from the dead camels, donkeys and cattle along the highway, but this did not deter the commuting refugees . . . Hospitals in Gaza daily receive those who explored these roads and fields.[12]

Three areas of the new Jewish state emerged as primary targets of Palestinian infiltration: the 'waist', twenty-five or thirty-five kilometres wide, between the Egyptian-held Gaza Strip and the Jordanian-occupied Hebron Hills in the southern West Bank, previously almost exclusively Arab and temptingly empty when the war ended; the Jerusalem Corridor between the northern and southern chunks of the West Bank, which had also been almost exclusively inhabited by Arabs before 1948 and was similarly empty when the shooting stopped; and the Coastal Plain along the Israeli-West Bank frontier north of the Latrun Salient, where established, relatively prosperous Jewish settlements as well as the crops in the abandoned Arab fields, orchards, and groves were the lure.

From the Israeli perspective, the infiltrators were not merely reclaiming abandoned property or engaged in petty pilfering; rather, they threatened Jewish settlement activity and property, and Jewish lives. From the start in 1948, a number of infiltrations had ended in the death of Israelis and

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[11] D. Replogle, Field Rep., Gaza Unit, to M. Ethridge (PCC), 27 Apr. 1949, AFSCA, Foreign Service 1949, Palestine (Publicity Reports, Misc., 1949). The Quakers were in charge of relief for the refugees in the Strip between the end of the war and the start of UNRWA activities in spring 1950.

[12] E. Gulley (Gaza) to NEA (New York), undated (but received 12 Apr. 1949), AFSCA, Foreign Service 1950, Palestine.

serious material damage to Israeli farmers. Following the 4 November murder of a Moshav Rishpon farmer, Eliezer Weiss, and the abduction of his wife, Esther, settlers in the Coastal Plain complained to Prime Minister Ben-Gurion of 'the poor security situation in the [area] . . . that was the result of the constant infiltration of Arabs. . .'. The infiltrators robbed and stole and, occasionally, murdered Jews.[13] The settlers demanded increased defensive measures and lobbied for the conquest of two neighbouring, Jordanian-held Arab villages. Ben-Gurion assured them that the IDF would increase its border patrolling but asked the settlers to increase their own nightly guard rosters.[14]

Infiltrators were also a threat to new and planned settlements along the borders precisely intended to block the incursions. Settlement interests and fears in the early 1950s usually reached Ben-Gurion via Levi Eshkol, then director of the Jewish Agency's Settlement Department. During the immediate post-war years, Eshkol was particularly worried about the fate of the new immigrant *moshavim* (co-operative settlements) in the southern part of the Jerusalem Corridor where, in spring 1950, four settlements were due to go up. The army, he complained, had said that there could be 'no secure travel [in the area], except in armoured cars . . . [and] the infiltrators do as they will, even in daytime'.

Of another eleven settlements that were planned for the area, Eshkol noted:

> The lack of suitable [pioneering] manpower and the pressure of the [immigrant transit] camps force us to settle this region mainly with new immigrants. But if the area is abandoned to the mercy of snipers, infiltrators and killers, how will we manage it? On the other hand, can we give up and leave the area. . .[15]

Eshkol described the new immigrant-settler as a 'wind-blown leaf', unsuitable to the rigours of the pioneering life, and called for the establishment of a special border settlements guard corps.[16] Ben-Gurion responded that, while 'protection of the settlements' was not really the Defence Ministry's responsibility ('the army is there [to guard] the security of the State and the Knesset gives us a budget only for this'), 'as . . . a Zionist and a Jew I cannot leave it at that'. He promised Eshkol a meeting with the IDF high command to resolve the problem.[17]

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[13] Sharon Bloc Workers Settlements Committee to workers settlements of the Sharon, 25 Nov. 1948, LA 235/IV, 2100; workers settlements in Gad and Asher districts (Rishpon, Yarkona, Tzofit, etc.) to Ben-Gurion and Minister of Police B. Shitrit, 30 Nov. 1948, LA 235/IV, 2275 gimel.

[14] 'Circular No. 3', regional defence committee of the agricultural settlements, central district, 1 Dec. 1948, LA 235/IV, 2275 gimel.

[15] L. Eshkol to Ben-Gurion, 18 Apr. 1950, ISA PMO 5433/23. The IDF chief of staff, Gen. Yadin, strongly disputed Eshkol's assertion. He maintained that the planned new settlements were in a relatively infiltrator-free area (west of the Har-Tuv-Beit Govrin road) and that infiltration was rife only east of that road (Yadin to Eshkol, 9 May 1950, CZA S-15/4272).

[16] Eshkol to Ben-Gurion, 14 Feb. 1950, CZA S-15/4272.

[17] Ben-Gurion to Eshkol, 8 May 1950, ISA PMO 5433/23.

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But the army simply had not the means to cope. Avraham Ikar, head of the newly established Security Section of the Jewish Agency Settlement Department, reported that the new immigrant settlements were in a poor way. IDF-employed guards (*muhzakim*, or kept ones) were ineffective; the army supplied only a minimum of light weapons to front-line settlements; the police did nothing. The settlers were largely untrained in the use of the weapons, which were in poor condition. 'With nightfall, movement between the settlements ceases, and all shut themselves inside,' he wrote in October 1950.[18]

Ikar, who constantly visited the settlements, was fed with information (and complaints) by the settlers and regional Settlement Department officials. One official reported to him at the end of 1950 on the 'wild' situation around Lydda-Migdal-Tzedek, where 'infiltrators steal from the settlements' (Nahshonim, Mizr`a-Har, Qula, Tirat Yehuda, Beit 'Arif, Nablat, Bnei Harel, Hadid, Gimzo, and Mivhan) and traded shots with settlement guards 'every night'. The situation, the official warned, was likely to get worse with the rains. He pleaded for more guards and IDF back-up: 'Help!'[19] Ikar demanded 'an [IDF] company' and a 'clean-up operation', which the army promised it would carry out.[20]

But little changed. In January 1951 Eshkol again complained to Ben-Gurion about the 'wild' situation and the continued thefts by gangs of Arab infiltrators in the Corridor.[21] And in August the director of the Negev Development Project, describing the 'security situation' as 'terrible', reported that every night infiltrators stole mules and goats from the *moshavim*. The settlers demanded help in guarding their homes or, alternatively, 'to be moved to the North'.[22]

Ben-Gurion, flanked by Eshkol and Dayan, had visited the northern Negev settlement leaders a year earlier. Almost all had the same complaints of thefts, despite the guard dogs, the enlarged settlement guard contingents, and the military courses members were taking. Zvi Silberstein of Kibbutz Yad Mordechai said that the Egyptians were 'trying to stop the infiltrators' but the refugees' hunger was too strong. The kibbutz representatives called for the establishment of more settlements, border fences, and minefields around the settlements. The kibbutz members dreaded the coming harvest-time, when the infiltrators would come to reap. Kibbutz Urim's representative, Yehuda Sasson, complained that some of the members had left, partly because of the infiltration:

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[18] Untitled unsigned report (probably by A. Ikar), 15 Oct. 1950, CZA S-92/17.

[19] H. Bar-Ilan to Settlement Dept., 5 Dec. 1950, CZA S-15/4272.

[20] Ikar to Y. Gavrieli, 13 Dec. 1950, CZA S-15/4272.

[21] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 15 Jan. 1951, BGA.

[22] Director of Mif'al HaNegev, to Eshkol, etc., 3 Aug. 1951, CZA S-15/8819.

> The mini [incidents]. . . [and the shooting] had frightened heads of families and children, and there are no shelters, trench positions, [and] there is almost no [perimeter] fence. . . There are abandoned Arab villages in the area [which serve the infiltrators as hiding places and way stations] and there is straw and barley—and the Arabs come to take it. . .

The new *moshavim* in the area were still harder hit and in one (Moshav T'kumah) it was reported that infiltrators even stole from the tents the settlers were still living in.[23]

Lobbying of this sort continued through the 1950s, with complaints about the untenable security situation and demands for more army protection, more guards, more physical barriers, and more equipment.[24]

The Types and Motives of Infiltration

Politics and Terrorism

From the first, Israeli officials believed that some cross-border raiding was politically motivated and meant specifically to harm Israelis and/or Israel. Some 'political' infiltrators were motivated by a desire for vengeance, whether for national or personal wrongs suffered in 1948 or for the deaths of relatives in later border clashes with IDF troops. During the mid-1950s there were several cases of Arab Legionnaires taking private revenge after the death of relatives in IDF raids, and a number of avenging gangs emerged during 1949 and the early 1950s, primarily among West Bank refugees.

Some infiltrations, organized by followers of the ex-Mufti or by other political organizations (such as the Muslim Brotherhood), doubtless also sought to spark conflict between Israel and either Jordan or Egypt, with the aim of harming the Arab regime in question.[25]

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[23] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 3 Feb. 1950, BGA.

[24] See, e.g., Moshavim Dept., HaOved HaTzioni, to Moshe Kol, 1 June 1953, CZA S-15/9787; Y. Korn, Moshavim Association, to Settlement Dept., Jewish Agency, 2 July 1953, CZA S-15/9787. It is perhaps worth noting that the 'lobbying' documentation I have seen, from the settlements and the settlement associations, contained no demand or request for the IDF to mount pre-emptive, revenge, or retaliatory strikes across the borders. The lobbyists always restricted themselves to demands for enhanced *defensive* measures—more guards, and so on. But through the early and mid-1950s Israeli Cabinet ministers and senior IDF officers cited pressure from the settlements when arguing for or planning retaliatory raids. Perhaps there were letters calling specifically for reprisals, and maybe they are deposited in IDFA—but none was made available to me.

[25] See, e.g., J. E. Chadwick (Tel Aviv) to foreign secretary, 3 Dec. 1951, PRO FO 371-91387 EE1091/63; G. Drew (Amman) to SecState, 4 Nov. 1951, NA RG 59, State Dept. Records, LM 60, Palestine and Israel, Foreign Affairs, Roll 2.

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A certain amount of infiltration, especially into Galilee in 1949, was directed against Israeli Arabs, who were seen to have thrown in their lot with the Jewish state. In March 1949 the Israeli police, acting on intelligence supplied by an Arab informer, ambushed a six-man band of infiltrators near Lydda, killing four and capturing one. According to the informer, the band had come with the primary purpose of stealing farm animals, but had also set out to kill two Lydda Arabs who were 'cooperating with the [Israeli] authorities'.[26]

During 1954-6 a new phenomenon emerged—state-run infiltration to exact revenge, terrorize Israeli border settlers and attack IDF patrols. Squads of Fedayeen (Arabic for 'self-sacrificers') were recruited and trained by Egyptian military intelligence and sent into Israel to avenge IDF raids and to 'weaken Israel' preliminary to the launching of a Second Round.[27] Jordan's military attaché in Cairo, Major Radi 'Abdallah, described the Egyptians' purpose:

> To create an intensive atmosphere of fear and the loss of security within Israel which would lead to the shaking of the confidence of the inhabitants in the Israeli government and army . . . . The creation of such an atmosphere within Israel will encourage migration from Israel and will decrease the number of immigrants to Israel . . . . To strengthen the morale of the Egyptian army as well as the morale of the Gaza area. This will also strengthen [Nasser's] Revolutionary Government internally.[28]

Reclaiming Possessions and Crops

Throughout the 1948-56 period there was a flow of refugees across the borders to harvest crops and pick fruit in their former villages, most of whose lands had been taken over and cultivated by Jewish farmers, primarily new immigrants living in newly founded *moshavim*.

The extent of this refugee infiltration varied with the seasons (it was most common during harvest-time and dropped off in winter), the economic conditions in the refugee camps and villages, and the frequency of Israeli patrols and ambushes in each sector. This type of infiltration was perhaps most common across the Gaza Strip-Israel border because of 'the special circumstances prevailing in the Gaza Strip. There is there real land

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[26] Deputy military governor, Ramle-Lydda area, to Military Government HQ, 6 Mar. 1949, IDFA [illegible].

[27] 'Excerpts from the Statement by Colonel Yehoshafet Harkabi, DMI, at a Meeting with Journalists, 7.10.55', ISA FM 2440/7.

[28] Radi `Abdallah (Cairo) to chief of staff, Arab Legion (Amman), 5 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-115905.

hunger and the refugees push therefore naturally towards the [demarcation] line in order to plough and reap.'[29]

Cross-Border Cultivation and Grazing

One British report from the end of 1951 suggested that 'most' infiltrators along the Jordan-Israel border were not Palestinian refugees but villagers who had always lived on the Jordanian side of the armistice line but whose fields were now on the Israeli side of the border or in no man's land.[30] It is, however, unlikely that these were the majority. As Glubb put it: 'It is not in most cases [the people of the villages near the demarcation line] who infiltrate—it is the inhabitants of the dreary and sordid refugee camps.'[31]

Nevertheless, infiltrations by the West Bank border farmers and grazers were certainly numerous. The armistice agreement had left some eighty (roughly one in five) West Bank villages without at least part (and, in some cases, most) of their lands.[32] The economies of at least another twenty were seriously damaged by their separation from Arab villages and towns in Israel.

As with the refugee infiltrations, these forays by West Bank villagers were seasonally stimulated. Thus, in the winter of 1951 a British diplomat remarked on the increase in crossings by farmers 'to collect what they consider to be their own fruit'.[33]

At the end of 1953 Glubb concluded that the border incidents—the majority of them infiltrations—between 1948 and 1952, were 'seasonal and

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[29] A. Eilan to Rafael, 27 Mar. 1955, ISA FM 2439/2.

[30] Minute by J. M. Hunter, 27 Dec. 1951, on Chadwick to FO, 3 Dec. 1951, PRO FO 371-91387 E1091/63.

[31] 'A Note on Refugee Vagrancy', Glubb, end Feb. 1953 (misdated end Mar. 1953), PRO FO 371-104778.

[32] West Bank villages with part or most of their pre-1948 landholdings on the post-1949 Israeli side of the border were, from north to south, Raba, E1 Mughaiyir, Jalbun, Faqqu`a, `Arabunna, Jalama, Ti`innik, Zububa, Rummana, Khirbet et Taiyiba, `Anin, Barta`a, Qaffin, Zeita, `Illar, `Attil, Deir el Ghusun, Shuweika, Tulkarm, Dannaba, Irtah, Far`un, Beit Lid, Shufa, Kafr Sur, `Abbush, Kafr Zibad, Kafr Jammal, Jaiyus, `Azzun, Qalqilya, Habla, Kafr Thulth, Deir Ballut, Rantis, Shuqba, Qibya, Budrus, Saffra, Beit Sira, Ni`lin, al Midya, Beit Liqya, Beit Nuba, Imwas, Ajanjul, Yalu, Beit `Inan, Qatanna, el Qubeiba, Biddu, Beit Surif, Beit Iksa, An Nabi Samwil, Shu`fat, Sur Bahir, Beit Safafa, Sharafat, Battir, Husan, Wadi Fukin, al Jab`a, Surif, Beit Aula, Idna, Khirbet Beit Awwa, Khirbet el Maid, Khirbet Deir el `Asal, Khirbet er Rush, Khirbet el Burj, Adh Dhahiriya, Yatta, es Samu, Bani Na`im, `Arab el Jahalin, `Arab el Ka`abina, and `Arab er Rashayida (the last three being bedouin tribes inhabiting the south-east corner of the West Bank (UNRWA West Bank Survey Map of West Bank Villages reproduced in Plascov, *Refugees*). Many of these villages figured as targets of IDF reprisal raids during the 1950s.

[33] Consulate general, Jerusalem, to Eastern Dept., FO, 17 Dec. 1951, PRO FO 371-91387 EE1091/65.

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spontaneous. [For] example, [there was an] increase [in infiltrations] each year in season[']s ploughing and harvest when many people [were] in fields. In orange-growing areas, seasonal increases [in infiltration] in orange-picking season. . .'[34] In early April 1953, American diplomats reported that 'oranges were now plentiful in Nablus because an Arab from there had calmly walked across the frontier with his camel, loaded it up, and returned'.[35]

Economic conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip after 1948 were difficult, partly because of the massive influx of refugees and insufficient international aid. Further, the West Bank villagers' loss of lands due to the armistice agreement created a whole new class of impoverished agriculturists. This 'increasing destitution and misery . . . drives the border population to try to steal from the Jews even at the cost of being arrested and killed', wrote one observer.[36]

There was also, as Glubb put it:

> Some deep psychological urge which impels a peasant to cling to and die on his land. A great many of these wretched people are killed now, picking their own oranges and olives just beyond the line. The value of the fruit is often negligible. If the Jewish patrols see him he is shot dead on the spot, without any questions. But they will persist in returning to their farms and gardens.[37]

Some infiltrating West Bank shepherds, at least initially, may not have known exactly where the demarcation line ran, and the border remained unmarked or poorly marked for years (mainly because the Jordanians, for political reasons, repeatedly rejected Israeli proposals for a proper demarcation). Thus there was frequent accidental infiltration in the first year or two after the armistice.[38]

But by the mid-1950s this argument held little water—as Arab spokesmen, at least privately, acknowledged. At the beginning of 1954 Israeli intelligence intercepted a message from Glubb stating that 'there is no truth in the shepherds' contention that they do not recognise the border line',[39] for there had been enough bloodshed along the border for shepherds and farmers to know exactly where the demarcation line ran, whether or not it was marked by a fence, ditch, or barrels.

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[34] Glubb to Col. Melville, Arab Legion Liaison Office, London, 20 Nov. 1953, PRO FO 371-104791.

[35] 'Israel-Jordan Border Relations: Annual Review from January 1, 1952 through February 16, 1953', S. R. Tyler jun. (Jerusalem) to State Dept., 1 Apr. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2, 684a.85/4-153.

[36] Consulate general (Jerusalem) to Eastern Dept., FO, 17 Dec. 1951, PRO FO 371-91387 EE1091/65.

[37] 'Note on Refugee Vagrancy', Glubb, PRO FO 371-104778.

[38] 'Israel-Jordan Border Relations', Tyler to State Dept., NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2, 684a.85/4-153.

[39] 'Glubb Demands the Punishment of Infiltrators', Israel Foreign Ministry Research Dept. memo., 26 Mar. (or May) 1954, ISA FM 2453/6.

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Intelligence-Gathering

Infiltration for the purpose of intelligence-gathering was relatively common along the Egyptian border during 1949-56. It was also practised by the Syrian authorities, but was relatively rare along the Jordanian and Lebanese borders.

Occasionally, the Egyptians sent small squads of two or three regular troops across the border to spy on Israeli military activity and installations. More often, however, they used Palestinian refugees, usually from the south and familiar with the terrain on the Israeli side. These scouts conducted surveillance of IDF camps and patrols and occasionally broke into armouries to steal weapons.[40] Egyptian intelligence-gathering operations in Israel increased as tensions between the two countries mounted in 1955-6. In January 1956, IDF CGS Dayan said Egyptian intelligence scouts were infiltrating into Israel 'night after night'.[41]

Visiting Relatives

Many infiltrators, especially in the immediate post-1948 years, crossed the borders to visit relatives, sometimes combining business—smuggling, currency exchanges—with the pleasure of family celebrations. Most such visitors crossed from Lebanon or the northern West Bank into Galilee (where the majority of Israel's Arab minority lived), the 'Little Triangle' or Majdal/Ashkelon.

There were also a number of 'regular' illegal visitors—Arab youngsters studying in Arab countries with parents in Israel. These youngsters would cross back and forth during school vacations. In April 1953 American diplomats reported the case of 'two boys from St George's School' in Jordanian Jerusalem who regularly visited their father in Nazareth. The Israeli authorities apparently knew of and turned a blind eye to these illegal visits. 'There is much of this which goes on with the knowledge of both sides', wrote an American diplomat.[42]

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[40] 'The Infiltration into Israel', IDF General Staff Branch/Intelligence, undated but with a covering letter, Intelligence Branch to foreign minister's secretary, 20 Jan. 1954, ISA FM 2402/12. See also 'Infiltration into Israel in 1952 and the Recent Tension (Dec. 1952-Jan. 1953) along the Borders', ISA FM 2402/12.

[41] 'The CGS's Lecture—Facts for Assessing the Situation in 1956', Lt.-Gen. M. Dayan, text of lecture at IDF Staff and Command College, 15 Jan. 1956. See 'Memorandum: Radio Israel Broadcast on Dec. 10', Col. Gohar, Egyptian War Ministry, 20 Dec. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 3, for the unusual case of four 16-17-year-old Gaza pupils apparently recruited and sent across the line by Egyptian intelligence.

[42] 'Israel-Jordan Border Relations', Tyler to State Dept., NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2, 684a.85/4-153. See also 'Note on Refugee Vagrancy', Glubb, PRO FO 371-104778.

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A few infiltrators crossed the line with a vague nostalgic purpose—of looking once again at their abandoned homes, fields, and landscapes. A Quaker who ran an orphanage in Lebanon wrote in 1951 of refugees spending 'hours gazing [across the border] at their native land. . ., .[43] An American diplomat noted four years later: 'Many Arabs cross the [Israel-Jordan] frontier to have a look at their former property.'[44]

Resettlement in Israel

During the period mid-1948-53 between 30,000 and 90,000 refugees made their way illegally from their countries of exile to resettle in their former villages or in other Israeli Arab villages.[45] The movement was most pronounced from Lebanon to the villages in Galilee and (of bedouin) from Sinai to the northern Negev. Some officials said that Israel had for months turned a blind eye to this movement 'as an indication of [its] reasonableness', a claim endorsed by Sharett in August 1949.[46]

Indeed, especially along the border with Lebanon, there were times, such as November-December 1948, when Israeli troops were positively lax about such infiltration. After a tour of the border, the deputy military governor of Western Galilee reported

> a return movement [of refugees] from Lebanon . . . first by border inhabitants who had abandoned their places during the hostilities and hid in caves and woods on the . . . border . . . . To our consternation, we were informed that the return of the Arabs was being carried out with permission [of higher Israeli authority] . . . . It was impossible to determine who had given permission. . . since representatives of various bodies are at work in the area . . . . Someone even told us about a man

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[43] 'Report of [the] Daniel and Emily Oliver Orphanage for 1950', D. and E. Oliver, Ras el-Matn, Lebanon, to Mr and Mrs C. Pickett, 7 Feb. 1951, AFSCA, General Administration, 1951, Lebanon. See also E. Gulley (Gaza) to NEA, New York, early Apr. 1949, AFSCA, Foreign Service 1949, Palestine.

[44] 'Israel-Jordan Border Relations', Tyler to State Dept., NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2, 684a.85/4-153.

[45] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 150, entry for 15 Nov. 1953. The head of the Military Government, Lt.-Col. Y. Shani, said in late 1953 that some 30,000 refugees had illegally resettled in Israel in the second half of 1948 and early 1949, and another 20,000 had resettled since. According to a Foreign Ministry Research Dept. estimate, by mid-1951 between 28,500 and 41,500 Arabs had succeeded in infiltrating and resettling. Of these, 23,500 had received *post facto* permission to stay from the authorities ('Some Statistics about the Arabs in Israel', Foreign Ministry Research Dept., undated (but probably from mid-1951), ISA FM 2550/16. The report states that there were at the time altogether 170,000-190,000 Arabs in Israel.) Some Israeli officials spoke of as many as 90,000 resettling infiltrators.

[46] Protocol of meeting of Mapai Knesset Faction and Party Secretariat, 28 July 1949, LPA 2-11/1/1; E. R. Warner (UK delegation, Geneva) to J. E. Chadwick, Eastern Department, FO, 21 June 1949, PRO FO 371-75350 E7857/1017/31; protocol of meeting of Mapai Knesset Faction and Party Secretariat, 1 Aug. 1949, LPA 2-11/1/1.

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> from the Foreign Ministry who, it seems, allowed [this return] out of higher political considerations . . . . [Someone] also mentioned the [responsible] military authorities [as having given the permission].[47]

Some Israeli officers doubtless were motivated by humanitarian feelings. Others probably saw the returnees increasing the proportion of Christians among Israel's remaining Arabs. Thus, for example, several groups of mainly Maronite refugees (from Kafr Bir`im and Eilabun) were allowed to trickle back. But the explanation for the successful resettlement in Israel of most of these refugees was simpler: the borders were poorly patrolled, long, and easily crossed, and the Israeli security forces could not cope. By and large, both the Israeli government and the public were adamantly opposed to the return of any of the refugees, legally or otherwise.

In any case, such infiltration slowed markedly after 1950. Repeated IDF-police round-ups and expulsions from the Galilee and Little Triangle Arab villages had a cumulatively deterrent effect. By mid-1950 the head of the Military Government, Lieutenant-Colonel Mor (Markovsky), was able to report that Israel had '[largely] overcome infiltration whose purpose was resettlement'.[48] According to the IDF, only some 20,000 Arab refugees managed to resettle in Israel in the three-year period leading up to November 1953, and, to deter others from following their example, this group was not given *post facto* permission to stay, as were many of the 1949-50 returnees.[49]

Theft and Robbery from Jews

Theft from Jews by infiltrators began well before the signing of the armistice agreements. An Israeli complaint concerning the night of 5-6 February 1949 was typical:

> Two mules stolen from stables of Mrs Miriam Steindam of Kfar Ganim. Traces led . . . to [Iraqi-occupied] Kafr Qasim. One cow and one horse stolen from shed of Mr Zelig Sneidower of Moshav HaYovel. Traces led . . . towards [Iraqi-occupied] Rantis. One mule stolen from stable of Mr Abraham Feldman of Shechunat Geula. Owner fired at thieves who fled towards Rantis.

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[47] A. Ye`eli to Y. Duvdevani, Defence Ministry, 21 Nov. 1948, LPA 2-48/1/4 vav. Ye`eli further related that, after the tour, his boss, the military governor of Western Galilee, Rehav`am Amir, wrote to his superiors complaining about what was happening. 'The matter, in the end, reached comrade Ben-Gurion's ears, and an order was given to stop the migration of the Arabs into the country,' recorded Ye`eli.

[48] Protocol of Knesset Finance Committee meeting, 16 May 1950, HHA-ACP 95.10.13 (1).

[49] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 150, entry for 15 Nov. 1953. Israeli Arab villagers adopted various ploys to help would-be returnees. Occasionally, according to Shani, when an Israeli Arab woman died, her relatives would refrain from informing the authorities and smuggle in a refugee woman to take her identity and place: 'This custom has resulted in a situation that, in some Arab villages, women have simply ceased to die.'

In all these cases, 'investigations have proved that the thieves were civilian Arabs in collaboration with Iraqi soldiers', ruled the local UN observer.[50]

By December 1951, claimed Israel's deputy director of military intelligence, Lieutenant-Colonel Harkabi, 'most of the infiltrators . . . [were coming] over the border not to pasture their flocks or to harvest their crops but to steal and murder'. An average of five Israelis, soldiers and civilians, were being killed each month, he noted. He implied that the killings were usually not politically motivated but rather the incidental result of economically motivated raiding. The IDF maintained that on average each night there were five or six cases of robbery with violence by infiltrators.[51]

Glubb agreed that 'a good many infiltrators go to steal'. He explained that most of the refugees lived in destitution on UNRWA rations,

> barely enough for subsistence. . . . People living without employment, with nothing to do . . . and receiving only 13/6d. worth of food per month, are prone to wander about and get into trouble . . . These people . . . are filled with hatred for Israel. . . . The nuisance of infiltration is the price the Jews are paying for the brutality with which they liquidated the Arabs resident in their country.

Glubb believed that, of the '30 infiltrations every 24 hours', it was 'reasonable to assume that 7 or 8 persons every night cross into Israel to see what they can pick up'.[52]

As with other types of infiltration, here too the weather and the extent of IDF patrolling both affected incidence.[53] Among the main objects of theft were farm animals and implements. Irrigation pipes and electrical wiring were also popular, being sold to West Bank and Gaza Strip scrap metal dealers.[54]

Egyptian documents, captured by the IDF in Gaza in 1956, tell of a Gaza merchant who in 1950-1 organized groups of infiltrators from among the local refugee population to steal irrigation pipes and other farming equipment from Israeli border villages. He paid each infiltrator E£8 per sortie.[55] Israeli intelligence believed that 'at least' three 'well-organized' gangs of cross-border robbers were operating in the Gaza Strip in mid-1950, 'supported by the Egyptian intelligence service which sees value in

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[50] Lt. B. (?) to (?), 7 Feb. 1949, and 'Petah Tikva Team', Lt.-Col. Dudognon (French army) to Tel Aviv Field Observers' Group, 9 Feb. 1949, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-25.

[51] Chadwick (Tel Aviv) to foreign secretary, 3 Dec. 1951, PRO FO 371-91387 EE1091/63.

[52] 'Note on Refugee Vagrancy', Glubb, PRO FO 371-104778.

[53] The IDF Intelligence Dept. wrote in Feb. 1952: 'As a result of the improvement in the weather and a slight drop in the activity of our forces, the number of thefts rose by 20 per cent [in January 1952]' ('The Activity on the Borders: Summaries and Conclusions for Jan. 1952', 19 Feb. 1952, ISA FM 2428/7.)

[54] British Embassy (Cairo) to Shuckburgh, FO, 26 Jan. 1955, PRO FO 371-115896: 'irrigation pipes commanded a ready market as scrap' in Gaza.

[55] E. Ya`ari, *Mitzrayim VeHaFedayeen, 1953-1956* (Arab and Afro-Asian Monograph Series, 13; Centre for Arab and Afro-Asian Studies, Giv`at Haviva, 1975).

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undermining the morale of our settlements by robberies, by the [ex-]Mufti's supporters . . . and by rich people who buy and hide the stolen goods'.[56]

Sheep were a principal target of theft. In a major sheep-rustling incident on 17 February 1954, five armed infiltrators from Gaza overpowered an Israeli shepherd and stole 260-70 sheep belonging to Kibbutz Dorot. Unusually, the shepherd, Yitzhak Heller, was released unharmed after being held for eight hours. Heller later reported that one of his captors told him that he had been expelled in 1949 by the IDF from Faluja. The infiltrators had argued among themselves whether to kill the captive.[57]

In another incident, in September 1954, a flock of 480 sheep was stolen in the Jezreel Valley. Most of the sheep were returned by the Jordanian authorities (while Israel returned a Jordanian truck that had strayed across the frontier).[58]

There also seem to have been one or two cases of infiltrators crossing the border for the purpose of extortion. In March 1949 the monks of Deir Rafat Monastery, in the Jerusalem Corridor, complained to the army that a band of infiltrators had arrived at their doorstep and extorted money, threatening to return for more.[59]

Passage to and from Gaza

In mid-1950 Glubb claimed that 'most' Arab infiltration into Israel involved incursions by Arabs from Gaza on their way to the Hebron Hills.[60] This is clearly incorrect. Illegal movement from the Strip to the West Bank and vice versa accounted for only a small proportion of the total infiltration, though it was substantial during 1949-50, falling off markedly after 1951.[61]

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[56] (?) District HQ/Intelligence to Southern Command HQ/Intelligence, OC Negev District, etc., 28 June 1950, IDFA $\frac{1386/51}{31}$.

[57] Kibbutz Dorot to inspector for Gaza District, Israel police, 10 Jan. 1957, and *Hadaf HaInformativi* (the Kibbutz Dorot bulletin), 196 (19 Feb. 1954), and 197 (26 Feb. 1954), Kibbutz Dorot Archive; *Hedei Ruhama* (the Kibbutz Ruhama bulletin), 18 Feb. 1954 and 6 Mar. 1954, Kibbutz Ruhama Archive; Dorot Secretariat to Y. Yizraeli, Ihud HaKvutzot YeHaKibbutzim, 21 Feb. 1954, Kibbutz Dorot Archive; A. Efrat (Farda), chairman of Sha`ar HaNegev Local Council, to Southern District Commissioner, 28 Mar. 1954, Sha`ar HaNegev Local Council Archive; interview with Y. Heller, Kibbutz Ruhama, 15 June 1989; 'List of Incidents on the Gaza Strip Border and in the Demilitarised Zone in Nitzana (beginning 3.2.54 to 20.2.54)', unsigned, undated (but probably compiled by the Foreign Ministry Research Dept. early in 1954), ISA FM 2439/1.

[58] R. Blackiston (Jerusalem) to State Dept., 11 Oct. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4.

[59] Military Governor, Ramle-Lydda area, to OC Military Government, 11 Mar. 1949, IDFFA $\frac{1860/50}{50}$.

[60] Drew to SecState, 30 June 1950, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 1.

[61] Glubb to A. S. Kirkbride, 28 June 1950, PRO FO 371-82205: 'The Jews have driven a wedge about 20 miles wide between the Gaza and Hebron districts There is no alternative by sea. It is true that it is possible to fly, but this is of course prohibitively expensive for refugees.'

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Many infiltrators were probably driven by a desire to leave the overcrowded, impoverished Strip for the more prosperous West Bank, and small wonder to judge by this grim IDF intelligence report:

> [The Gaza refugee] community . . . is condemned to complete extinction. The property they brought with them is slowly disappearing There is no employment in the area, there is no hope of reaching Egypt Rape, theft, discrimination and beatings [by the Egyptians] are a daily event. On the other hand, the expanse of Transjordan, the participation of Palestinians in [the Jordanian] government, rehabilitation programmes, borders with [other] Arab countries and the rumour about the possibility of finding work—are attractive and motivate many to wander [from Gaza to the West Bank].[62]

Some infiltrators hoped to use Jordan as a staging post to wander farther afield in the Arab world or to the West, since it was easier to leave for other countries from the West Bank than from the Gaza Strip. Others undertook the hazardous journey to visit relatives parted from them by the war.

At the end of 1949, the 'Beirut Commissioner' of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Donald Stevenson, wrote of the 'incessant trickle' of refugees moving from Gaza to the West Bank, drawn by 'the greater possibilities' in Jordan. Most dashed across the thirty or forty kilometres of the northern Negev 'waist' to the Hebron Hills in camel trains. Apparently, the numbers were increasing, for, according to Stevenson, the League of Red Cross Societies had written to ask 'that we discourage such transfers'.[63] Occasionally, the caravans encountered IDF patrols, which often opened fire. Sometimes these infiltrators would raid an Israeli settlement for food and provisions.[64]

In June 1950 Kirkbride, the British minister, reported from Amman that

> an increasing number of refugees are making their way from Gaza to Hebron . . . bringing with them stories of hardship and Egyptian oppression. These people, who move in parties as large as 150 persons, seem to be able to cross Israeli territory unhindered in the hours of darkness.[65]

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[62] (?) District HQ/Intelligence to Southern Command HQ/Intelligence, OC Negev District, etc., 28 June 1950, IDFA $\frac{1388/51}{31}$.

[63] D. Stevenson (Beirut) to B. Clark, Foreign Service Section, AFSC, New York, 7 Dec. 1949, AFSCA, Foreign Service, 1949, Palestine, Personnel—Picketts, Beirut Commissioner Letters. Stevenson, incidentally, said that he 'certainly' had no intention of discouraging Gaza refugees from migrating to Jordan: 'The more people who can get to Jordan [from the Gaza Strip], the better.'

[64] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 3 Feb. 1950, BGA. See also 'Excerpts from letter from Kelly [Peckham] to Cassius [Fenton], Cairo, 11 Sept. 1950', AFSCA, Foreign Service 1950, Palestine, Corres.: Letters to/from Palestine.

[65] 'Monthly Sit. Report for the Jordan for the Month of May 1950', Kirkbride to FO, 1 June 1950, PRO FO 371-82703 ET1013/6.

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Indeed, on 10 October 1950, a large caravan from Gaza heading for Hebron was intercepted by an IDF patrol, and some 120 Arabs were detained. Rather unusually, the Israeli authorities in this case made an *ad hoc* decision to allow the Arabs to proceed to Hebron, even supplying them with transport.[66] Infiltrators from Gaza were occasionally apprehended by the Jordanians, sentenced to prison, and, upon release, forced to cross back to the Strip through Israel.[67] A few Gaza-to-Hebron infiltrators were pilgrims *en route* to Mecca.[68]

A far smaller number, normally bent on smuggling, tried to make the journey in the other direction, from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip.

Infiltration from Gaza to Jordan through Israel declined after 1951, partly because of sterner Egyptian and Israeli measures, and partly because Jordan felt that it had enough refugees.[69] But the caravans from Gaza to the West Bank continued, largely because Jordan continued to refuse entry to Gaza Arabs who tried to make the move legally.[70] On the night of 27-8 February 1953, for example, an IDF patrol encountered a group of '15 Arabs', in the Hebron foothills, and in the ensuing 'exchange of fire' killed six of them. The Arabs, the Israelis reported, were part of 'a convoy from the Gaza Strip to Jordan'.[71] In his memoir of these years in the IDF's Paratroop (890th) Battalion, Mordechai Gur recalled that at the end of 1954 a squad of his troops had ambushed such a caravan, killing one Arab.[72]

In 1954 Jordan formally appealed to Egypt to stop the Gaza-West Bank infiltration. For its own part, the Jordanian Government announced that Gazans arriving in the West Bank without a permit would not receive UNRWA relief and would be subject to expulsion.[73]

Smuggling

Most of the smuggling of the late 1940s and early 1950s was carried out by Arab refugees who dealt with Israeli Arabs in the Galilee or Samaria foot-

[66] W. Riley to A. Cordier, 18 Oct. 1950, containing text of Israeli complaint to EIMAC meeting of 12 Oct. 1950, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-27.

[67] Ya`ari, *Mitzrayim*, 9.

[68] Ibid.

[69] P. Johnson (Beirut), to Friends, 14 Oct. 1951, AFSCA, Foreign Service, 1951, Lebanon, Social and Technical Assistance, Letters.

[70] 'Report on a Meeting that Took Place on 22 July 1952 at Kilometre 95 on the Gaza Road', Lt.-Col. B. Harman to OC Southern Command, etc., 30 July 1952, ISA FM 2436/6 bet.

[71] US Dept., FM, to Israel embassies Washington and London, 3 Mar. 1953, ISA FM 2949/15.

[72] M. Gur, *Peluga Dalet* (Tel Aviv, 1977), 89.

[73] Plascov, *Refugees*, 76.

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hills villages. Some also did business with Israeli Jews. On the Lebanese border, IDF intelligence monitored 'links between [Arab smugglers] and Jews (in Metulla). The smuggling is organized with the help of the [Metulla] *mukhtar*'.[74] Smuggling, the IDF suggested, was occasionally a cover for intelligence-gathering and other clandestine operations.[75]

The Jordanian authorities usually frowned upon the smuggling, for it involved 'the loss of textiles, sugar and other imported commodities' to Jordan while Amman got nothing in return, the smugglers being paid in Israeli currency, which was then exchanged on the black market in Jordan or Lebanon.[76] Some West Bank traders also objected to the smuggling because it tended to lower the price of goods locally and was seen as aiding Israel's economy.[77]

In 1954 a senior Israeli officer reported 'large-scale' smuggling by infiltrators of sheep—for food and/or wool—from Jordan to Israel.[78] Some of the smuggling, according to Glubb, involved traditional Arab clothing, unavailable in Israel: 'No clothes for Muslim women could be bought or sold in Israel. The [bedouin] men of [the] Beersheba [area] (sooner than unveil their women and dress them in short skirts) were obliged to "infiltrate" into Hebron to shop for their wives.'[79]

Along the Egyptian border the smuggling usually was conducted between bedouin tribes on both sides of the line. Occasionally, these tribes, when angered by IDF interception or expulson, would take revenge by mining IDF patrol roads.[80] Some arms smuggling—specifically by Muslim Brotherhood members in Gaza and Sinai to their brethren in the West Bank—seems to have taken place in the mid-1950s.[81]

Fishing

There was a certain amount of maritime infiltration into Israeli territorial waters in 1949 and the early 1950s by Gaza Strip and Southern Lebanese

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[74] 'Activity on the Borders, Jan. 1952', ISA FM 2428/7.

[75] 'Bi-Weekly Security Report No. G-5 for the Period 30.3.50 to 14.4.50', Intelligence officer, Brigade HQ/Haifa District, 14 Apr. 1950 IDFA $\frac{240/54}{115}$

[76] Consulate general, Jerusalem, to Eastern Dept., FO, 17 Dec. 1951, PRO FO 371-91387 E1091/65.

[77] Plascov, *Refugees*, 74.

[78] Lt.-Col. Y. Varbin, Negev Military Governor, to Defence Ministry/Military Government Dept., 11 Apr. 1954, IDFA $\frac{522/57}{31}$.

[79] 'Note on Refugee Vagrancy', Glubb, PRO FO 371-104778.

[80] Capt. G. Neuberger, Israel delegation to EIMAC, to IDF General Staff officer for MACs, etc., 25 June 1953, ISA FM 2438/6.

[81] A. Cohen, *Political Parties in the West Bank under the Jordanian Regime, 1949-1967* (Ithaca, NY, 1982), 169.

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fishermen. Usually, the purpose was fishing; sometimes, smuggling.[82] Israeli coastguard units were under-equipped and undermanned, and probably it was fairly easy for small Arab fishing boats to poach in Israeli waters.

The Relative Weight of the Different Types of Infiltration

Economics motivated the bulk of the infiltrators along Israel's borders up to 1956. As one American diplomat put it:

> Unemployment, food [shortages] and general living conditions on the Jordan side [of the border] are particularly bad. On the other hand, conditions on the Israel side are comparatively good . . . . Consequently, the idle Arab on the Jordan side is sorely tempted by the green fields on the Israel side—particularly since some of these fields might once have belonged to him.

Moreover, added the diplomat, 'demarcation lines are somewhat foreign to the Arab's make-up'.[83]

Glubb graphically illustrated the point:

> Qalqilya before 1948 lived on its orange groves. The . . . demarcation line [now] passes between the village and its . . . groves. The people of Qalqilya are starving in their houses and can see their orange groves . . . In December 1950, the people of Qalqilya could see their orange trees 300 yards away loaded with fruit. They got empty sacks and stole out at night and each man started to pick *his own oranges* . . .. In Jewish parlance, this is looting and plunder by Arab criminals.[84]

This assessment was echoed by an official of the Research Department of the Israel Foreign Ministry. She wrote in March 1953:

> Basic Assumptions: 1. The infiltration is, in most cases, the result of dearth, a separation from sources of income [i.e. fields on the wrong side of the border] or from family members, and of the reality of the refugee camps near the border.[85]

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[82] 'Bi-Weekly Security Report No. G-4, for the Period 14.3.50 to 29.3.50', Intelligence officer, Brigade HQ/Haifa District, 29 Mar. 1950, IDFA $\frac{240/54}{115}$, for the capture by Israeli troops on 17 Mar. 1950 of four infiltrators near Achziv beach and the capture on 24 Mar. 1950 of eight Sidon fishermen near Acre.

[83] R. Ford (Tel Aviv) to SecState, 14 June 1950, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 1.

[84] Glubb to Riley, 8 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/23 (emphasis in original).

[85] It is worth noting at this point that there are no reliable statistics relating to the refugee-farmer ratio of infiltrators. There is no way to determine on the basis of the available evidence how many of the infiltrators each year were refugees from what had become Israeli territory and how many were border villagers who had always lived on the Arab side of the West Bank and Gaza demarcation lines. But Glubb's occasional assertion that all or the over-

(Footnote continued on next page)

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> Its purposes are mainly theft, robbery, smuggling and grazing and only in rare cases [is it aimed] deliberately at revenge and murder. 2. In large measure the infiltration [today] resembles the routine phenomenon of theft and robbery from Jewish settlements by Arab neighbours during the Mandate . . .[86]

Most participants at a meeting in early 1953 of IDF and Foreign Ministry intelligence officers and officials shared that assessment. Lieutenant-Colonel Avraham Tamir, of the IDF General Staff Branch, examining the phenomenon frontier by frontier, noted that, on the Lebanese border, 'the main infiltration is for smuggling and [re] settlement'. With the exception of a few cases of theft, there was almost no infiltration from Syria. On the Jordanian frontier, 'the infiltration is due to [i.e. is motived by] theft . . . . There is no accurate demarcation of the armistice line . . . . [There is also] infiltration for smuggling between Jordan and the Gaza Strip . . . . There were no acts of sabotage and mining along this border.' As to the Egyptian border, 'apart from the same factors that govern infiltration along the Jordanian border, there exists the problem of the wandering bedouin tribes. In so far as we expel them, [they respond] with acts of violence and mining.'[87]

Minimized here is the second main aim of infiltration during 1949-53: resettlement or visits to relatives or former homes. Israel police statistics for 1952 note that 6,673, infiltrators crossed the borders in 1952 with 'criminal intent' (theft, robbery, sabotage, etc.) in 1,896 incidents (the infiltrators operating on average in groups of three or four). But as many as 2,700 crossed without 'criminal' intent, mainly to resettle or to visit relatives.[88]

A Foreign Ministry Research Department report for 1 May 1951-1 May 1952, based mainly on IDF Intelligence Department figures, found that during this period there had been forty-three cases of sabotage and mining by infiltrators along Israel's borders—one on the Syrian border, none on the Lebanese, sixteen along the Egyptian, and twenty-six along the Jordanian. There were a further 192 cases of minor sabotage and vandal-

(Footnote continued from previous page)

whelming bulk of the infiltration was by refugees cannot stand the test of available statistics. For example, the IDF General Staff officer for MACs, Lt.-Col. H. Gaon, in December 1952 told a gathering of western military attachés in Tel Aviv that only '10 per cent' of the armed robberies by infiltrators were committed by refugees (as opposed to 90% commited by non-refugee West Bankers and Gaza residents). But refugees, he said, were responsible for 60-70% of the theft-oriented infiltrations from Jordan ('Meeting on 9th December 1952 with Lt. Colonel Gaon to Discuss Mixed Armistice Commission Activities', Col. Roper, British Military Attaché, Tel Aviv, 12 Dec. 1952, PRO FO 371-98475).

[86] Y. Vered to K. Katz, 12 Mar. 1953, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph.

[87] 'Infiltration into Israel in 1952 and the Recent Tension (Dec. 1952-Jan. 1953) along the Borders', ISA FM 2402/12.

[88] 'Infiltration—Annual Survey, 1.1.52-31.12.52', ISA FM 2402/12.

ism, such as the destruction of irrigation pipes and the severing of telephone wires.

During the same period, there were 896 cases of cross-border grazing, ploughing, and harvesting—154 along the Egyptian border, 30 along the Lebanese border, 528 along the Syrian border, and 184 along the Jordanian border. Cases of theft and attempted theft numbered 1,575:371 along the Egyptian border, 14 along the Syrian, 18 along the Lebanese, and 1,172 cases along the Jordanian.

Of the some 1,400 infiltrators captured around the country during the period covered by the report, some two hundred had crossed the border to steal farm animals, about one hundred to steal agricultural produce, thirty to rob passers-by, twelve to commit murder, five to commit acts of sabotage, two hundred to smuggle goods or foreign currency, and fifteen to steal telephone wires or railway tracks. Another two hundred infiltrated to visit relatives; some six hundred crossed to attempt resettlement, and three of those caught had intended to cross through Israel to another Arab country.

Smuggling was more widespread than the figure for those captured indicates. Mentioned in the report as among the products commonly smuggled are coffee, tea, sugar, rice, and clothes, as well as 'luxury items' such as 'Virginia cigarettes, watches, fountain pens, gilt sunglasses and nylon stockings'. Smugglers would often take back such products as kerosene, flour, and medicines, which were either in short supply in the Arab states or much cheaper in Israel. There was also 'transit' smuggling of Lebanese- and Syrian-grown hashish through Israel to Egypt, 'the [region's] main drug user'.

The report analysed the types of infiltration by country of origin. Thus, on the Lebanese border, the 'most characteristic infiltration, apart from that to resettle, is armed infiltration for the purpose of robbery or smuggling by [organized] gangs'. Most infiltrators were Palestinian refugees; some of the gangs were bedouin run by local Shiites.[89]

'Infiltration from Syria is mainly geared to smuggling and theft. And . . . espionage,' stated the report. 'Infiltration from Jordan, the most serious, is mainly criminal . . . especially for the purpose of theft, robbery, and smuggling.' When a murder occurred, more often than not it was an incidental by-product of a sortie whose purpose was theft or robbery: 'These gangs do not usually have a political purpose.'

[89] 'Arab Infiltration into Israel', ed. Ne'eman, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph. Ne'eman's figures for infiltrations are extremely low by comparison with police and IDF figures for 1952. The Israel police took a more sanguine view of infiltration from Lebanon, saying 'the problem of infiltration is almost non-existent in so far as the matter relates to Lebanon' and that which did exist was 'for purposes of smuggling and . . . visiting relatives . . . . These "infiltrators" are not hostile to us . . .'('Infiltration—Annual Survey 1.1.52-31.12.52', ISA FM 2402/12).

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The Research Department took a similar view of the infiltrators' motives along the Egyptian border. Theft and robbery predominated, revenge figured only occasionally. Fairly common were attacks by Sinai bedouin on their Israeli counterparts in the Negev by way of 'settling age-old accounts and vendettas'. In the northern Negev there were also infiltrations for the purpose of cross-country (West Bank-Gaza) smuggling and resettlement (from Gaza to the West Bank). There was also occasional Egyptian espionage-oriented infiltration.[90]

Available military intelligence statistics for the years 1950-3, while incomplete, amply bear out the assertion that the great bulk of infiltrations were economically rather than politically motivated. If anything, the ratio of economic to political-terrorist infiltration during the period 1950-April 1953 seemed to rise. Cases of theft and robbery and attempted theft and attempted robbery slightly increased each year between 1950 and 1953; political-terrorist infiltrations, divided into 'minings' and 'sabotage', decreased. Between 1 May and 31 December 1951 there were twenty incidents of mining, twelve in all of 1952, and seven in the first third of 1953. In 1950, there were thirty-eight instances of sabotage, in 1951 sixteen, in 1952 twenty, and, in the first third of 1953, six. By comparison, there were 980 cases of robbery or theft by infiltrators in 1950, 1,070 in 1951, 1,453 in 1952, and 504 in the first third of 1953.[91]

From these figures it would appear that probably less than 10 per cent of all infiltration during 1949-53 was politically motivated or undertaken for terrorist purposes. But this requires qualification: occasionally, economically motivated infiltrators ended up sabotaging Israeli property and injuring or killing Israelis; and, secondly, some of these economic infiltrators no doubt felt that, by stealing Israeli property, they were also, in some sense, avenging themselves on Israel.

Israeli military and intelligence documentation for the years 1954-6 gives no ground for assuming that there was any radical change in the ratio between the two broad types of infiltration. There may have been a small increase in the proportion of infiltrations aimed at harming Israelis or sabotaging Israeli targets (in part due to Egypt's activation of the Fedayeen in 1954-5), but the overwhelming majority remained economically and socially motivated—for theft, harvesting, smuggling, grazing, resettling, and family visits.

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[90] 'Arab Infiltration into Israel', ed. Ne'eman, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph. The army's view of the main cause of the infiltration from the Gaza Strip at this time was no different: 'The background to the increase in the incidents of infiltration and theft is the difficult economic condition of the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip.' Much of it was done by organized gangs (Lt.-Col. M. Hanegbi, chief Israel delegate to EIMAC, to IDF General Staff officer for MACs, etc., ? Feb. 1952, ISA FM 2438/6).

[91] Lt.-Col. Harkabi to CGS's bureau, 12 May 1953, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph.

Israel Police Special Branch monthly statistics for 1954-6 abundantly bear this out. In July 1954 there were 315 reported cases of infiltration. Ninety-nine infiltrators were captured (fifty-seven of them adult males, eighteen women, and twenty-four children or youths). One Israeli was murdered by infiltrators that month (three others were murdered by Arab Legionnaires) and forty-four thefts were committed. There were also eighteen 'attempted murders', though it is not clear how many involved Arab soldiers rather than infiltrators or how many were the work of infiltrators bent primarily on economic gain. Fifty-five infiltrators attempted resettlement and another forty-five had come to visit relatives. The report does not state the purpose of the remaining one hundred or so cases; presumably they were mainly for harvesting, grazing, and smuggling (the main unmentioned categories).[92]

Special Branch statistics for December 1954 list 319 cases, with forty-nine adult males, six women, and eight children captured by police. Seventy-seven of the December infiltrations were for theft, twenty-four for resettlement, and fourteen for family visits. Fewer than fifty of the 319 cases can be termed non-economic or non-socially motivated. They included three acts of sabotage, one of intelligence-gathering, one murder, fourteen attempted murders and live weapons attacks, and three cases of illegally carrying weapons. Again, over 100 of the infiltrations are not categorized in any way. But again, over 80 per cent of the month's infiltrations appear to have had economic or social motives—and fewer than 20 per cent, perhaps fewer than 10 per cent, were politically motivated or for terrorism.[93]

Israeli complaints to the Israel-Jordan Mixed Armistice Commission (IJMAC) are similarly instructive. Thus, in February 1955, of the seventy complaints lodged, forty-three referred to border crossings by 'unarmed civilians' and four to 'illegal [cross-border] cultivation'. The other complaints referred to crossing of the line by Jordanian military units (5), crossing of the demarcation line by armed civilians (5), firing across the demarcation line (13), one case of overflight, and one incident of stone-throwing.[94] Again, the political-terroristic component appears to have been a very small proportion of the total. (Israel during 1955-6 rarely

[92] 'Infiltration—Monthly Survey—July 1954', Israel Police HQ, Special Branch, Aug. 1954, ISA FM 2402/12. The Special Branch statistics for July 1954 are somewhat problematic as they include murders, attempted murders, and theft under the heading 'hostile infiltrations'. The survey, referring to the Gaza Strip, speaks of numerous cases of theft of cattle and irrigation pipes and of only one 'hostile incident'—the shooting by infiltrators of a resident of Ashkelon.

[93] 'Infiltration—Monthly Survey—Dec. 1954', Israel Police HQ, Special Branch, Jan. 1955, ISA FM 2591/18. Again, it is unclear how many of the attempted murders were committed by infiltrators and how many by regular Arab troops.

[94] 'Extract from Summary of the General Situation: UNTSO Report for the Period 26 Feb. to 4 Mar. 1955', unsigned and undated, PRO FO 371-115853.

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bothered to complain to the mixed armistice commissions about cross-border cultivation or grazing; presumably most of the 4,500 or so cases of infiltration annually during these years were of this 'benign' sort, and were never brought before the MACs).

From 29 July to 25 September 1956, Israel lodged fifty-nine complaints with the IJMAC, twenty-four dealing with infiltration. Eleven of these were line-crossings for 'theft or attempted theft'; three were crossings by 'unarmed civilians' (with no purpose stated); and ten were crossings by 'armed civilians' (nine of these cases ended in firing). No complaint was made of sabotage, mining, or politically motivated murder. It is probable that some, if not most, of these 'armed civilians' were 'economic' infiltrators. (The other incidents covered in the complaints involved overflights, border infractions by military units, and cross-border shootings.)[95]

Clearly, the statistics indicate that in 1954-6 the bulk of the infiltrations were still economically and socially motivated. The number of infiltrators crossing the border to kill Israelis or sabotage Israeli targets appears to have been exceedingly small.

The vast majority of the infiltrators during the second half of 1948, 1949, and 1950 came unarmed, which would suggest that their purpose was not political-terrorist. During 1950-1 officials on both sides of the border reported that, increasingly, infiltrators were both armed and better organized. This does not necessarily suggest that their purpose was increasingly political-terrorist. Rather, it appears, the arms were a response to Israel's shoot-to-kill policy along the frontiers. Glubb put it this way: 'The original infiltrators were harmless and unarmed, seeking lost property or relations. Yet Jewish terrorism [i.e. the shoot-to-kill policy and the reprisal raids] made the infiltrator into a gunman.'[96]

Be that as it may, the available and admittedly partial Israeli, Arab Legion, UN, and Western documentation makes it clear that the majority of the infiltrators continued to cross the border unarmed up to 1956.[97] But this is not always the picture that emerges from impressionistic Israeli evidence. Thus, Tanhum Arieli, the head of the Kibbutz Artzi's Security Department, reported at the end of 1952 that the infiltrators 'now always

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[95] 'Report of the Chief of Staff of the UNTSO', 29 Sept. 1956, PRO FO 371-121745.

[96] 'After Qibya', Glubb, 14 Jan. 1954, PRO FO 371-111069 R1072/10.

[97] Neither the IDF nor the Israel police in their monthly and yearly reports on infiltration during 1951-6 normally noted or distinguished between 'armed' and 'unarmed' infiltrators. The reluctance to make this distinction may have been due not only to embarrassment about the slaughter of unarmed infiltrators (described below), but also to objective problems of definition. For example, the fact that no weapon was found beside a dead infiltrator might have indicated that he had come unarmed, or that one of his partners had picked up the weapon before retreating across the border. Quite often, a band of infiltrators crossed the border with only one weapon between them. Would the gang be considered 'armed' or 'unarmed'? Would only the man carrying the weapon be considered 'armed'?

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come armed'.[98] Indeed, during 1952-3 there was a growing perception among Israeli border settlers that the character of the infiltration had radically changed, and that the aim had become 'murder and sabotage'.[99] The Israel police had identified some former criminals among captured infiltrators and believed that a hard core of the infiltrators, particularly those operating in organized gangs, were criminals with records stretching back to Mandate days.[100]

Israeli spokesmen were naturally interested, for political and propagandistic reasons, in promoting such views and presenting the infiltrators as gangs of professional cutthroats bent on murder, sabotage, and the methodical disruption of life in the Jewish state. 'Infiltration for sabotage, murder and revenge is increasingly edging out infiltration . . . whose objective was theft and personal gain,' wrote an Israel Foreign Ministry Arab affairs expert in mid-1953.[101] And an Israeli memorandum produced for distribution abroad stated: 'Far from restricting their activities to petty crime, the marauders commit acts of deliberate sabotage such as cutting lines of communication, preparing ambushes and committing indiscriminate murder.'[102]

Jordanian and British Officials disputed this. Geoffrey Furlonge, the British head of mission in Amman, wrote:

> [The Israeli view] that nowadays infiltrators are organised into armed gangs capable of putting up a stiff resistance . . . is untrue . . . . Infiltration is carried out by individuals and small groups, frequently of children, who go over to steal but not to murder and who are seldom if ever what could justifiably be described as well armed.[103]

But British officials did concede that there were some infiltrators—albeit 'bent on vengeance' for previous Israeli retaliatory raids—whose purpose was sabotage and murder.[104]

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[98] 'Circular No. 4', T. Arieli to area commanders (*ma"azim*), undated (but from Nov.- Dec. 1952), HHA 18.11 (4). Similar assertions are to be found in 'Arab Infiltration into Israel', ed. Ne'eman, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph, and in Tyler to State Dept. (quoting an Israel police officer), 19 Apr. 1951, 'Other Border Incidents (Jordan-Israel and Israel-Lebanon), April 4-18, 1951', NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[99] 'Circular No. 11', Kibbutz Artzi Security Dept. June 1953, HHA 18.11 (5). See also Benny Marshak at Mapam Centre meeting, 28 May 1953, HHA 90.68 aleph (9).

[100] 'Most of the infiltrators arrested in the act had long criminal records. These underworld characters are well known to us from their fingerprints, were released from prisons during the period of chaos [i.e. 1948) and, with the establishment of the State, have found an easy field of endeavour [in infiltration]' ('Infiltration—Annual Survey 1.1.52-31.12.52', ISA FM 2402/12).

[101] M. Sasson (Athens) to West Europe Dept., FM, 21 June 1953, ISA FM 2531/11 aleph.

[102] 'Arab Marauding in Israel', unsigned (but probably by the Israel Foreign Ministry Research Dept.), 12 May 1953, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph.

[103] G. Furlonge to A. D. M. Ross, Eastern Department, FO, 9 Mar. 1953, PRO FO 371-104779 ER1091/82.

[104] A. R. Moore (Tel. Aviv) to G. H. Baker, FO, 27 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104790.

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Israeli and other documentation overwhelmingly supports the Arab-British view that there was no radical change in the nature, purpose, and armaments of the majority of the infiltrators during 1952-3 (although February—April 1953 did see an increase in terrorist infiltration incidents along the Israeli-Jordanian border).[105] As Yosef Tekoah, the official in charge of armistice affairs at the Israel Foreign Ministry, put it, commenting on the spring 1953 wave of terrorist infiltration: 'no change has occurred . . . . [Routine, theft-directed] infiltration [continues as] the basis of the infiltration problem in general.[106] But the Israeli authorities were probably right in assuming that an increasing proportion of the infiltration had become organized and an increasing number of infiltrators were crossing the line armed.[107].

Israeli complaints to the IJMAC tended to corroborate Tekoah's view. As the British Embassy in Amman reported in early 1955, 'the most numerous category of infiltrators from Jordan consists of unarmed civilians. These make up 39 out of 45 of the complaints in the period 28 December [1954] to 15 January [1955].'[108] According to both British and Israeli officials, similarly unorganized or barely organized, unarmed infiltration prevailed along the Gaza Strip border.

'The pattern of incidents on the Gaza border seems to be of uncoordinated raids by small parties of refugees to steal anything from irrigation pipes to plum trees, sheep, olive saplings and sacks,' wrote one British official.[109] 'There is real hunger [in the Strip] and the refugees push, naturally, towards the [demaraction] line in order to plough and reap,' wrote an Israeli official.[110]

The years 1955-6 saw some increase in terrorist infiltrations and a certain decrease in economic infiltration, for the reasons discussed above. But the vast majority of infiltrators remained unarmed civilians motivated by economic and social factors.

The numbers of Israeli casualties caused by infiltrators confirms the

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[105] Glubb noted that in the 'summer' of 1953 there 'appeared a new feature—infiltrators who went only to kill' (*Soldier*, 305-6).

[106] Y. Tekoah to director general, FM, 20 July 1953, ISA FM 2429/5.

[107] The chief Israeli delegate to EIMAC, Lt.-Col. M. Hanegbi, while conceding, in early 1952, that the majority of infiltrators from the Gaza Strip were economically motivated, insisted that most of the thefts were now 'committed by a number of organized gangs' (Hanegbi to IDF General Staff officer for MACs, etc., ? Feb. 1952, ISA FM 2438/6). There were important geographical differences, both in terms of how infiltrators were armed and in terms of organization. There were areas, such as the Jerusalem Corridor, into which infiltrators often or usually came armed and usually organized, and areas, such as the Jezreel Valley, into which they usually came unarmed ('Infiltration—Annual Survey 1.1.52-31.12.52', ISA FM 2402/12).

[108] British Embassy (Amman) to Levant Dept., FO, 29 Jan. 1955, PRO FO 371-115852 VR1073/65.

[109] Minute by J.P. Tripp, 8 Feb. 1955, PRO FO 371-115896 VR1092/12.

[110] A. Eilan to Rafael, 27 Mar. 1955, ISA FM 2439/2.

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view that these years saw no radical shift in the nature of Arab infiltration. There was a rise in Israeli fatalities between 1949 and 1951 as infiltrators increasingly came armed (22 were killed in 1949; 19 killed and 31 wounded in 1950; 48 killed and 49 wounded in 1951). In 1952-3 casualties remained steady (42 killed and 56 wounded in 1952; 44 killed and 66 wounded in 1953), followed by a decline in fatalities in 1954-5 (33 killed and 77 wounded in 1954; 24 killed and 69 wounded in 1955). The abrupt increase in casualties in 1956 (54 killed and 129 wounded), is explained by the rise of state-directed Arab terrorism.[111]

Organized Infiltration

The vast majority of infiltrators into Israel during the years 1948-56 were, as we have seen, economically or socially motivated, and unorganized. Anything from one to thirty refugees or *fellahin* crossed the border to cultivate land, reap crops, steal, smuggle, visit relatives, or try to resettle in Israel. No one sent them; no one funded them.

But during 1949 a new phenomenon, of organized infiltration, for economic or political-terrorist purposes, emerged. The former resulted from the rise of a new type of entrepreneur in the West Bank and Gaza, who exploited the poverty of the refugees and dispossessed border farmers, and the relatively unguarded borders; their business acumen was also spurred by the differences in the price of certain goods on either side of the armistice line. Thus, the new entrepreneurs would organize a band of infiltrators; send them across the border to steal sheep and cattle, irrigation equipment, clothes, household goods, weapons from Jewish settlements; and then sell the goods locally. Some used infiltrators to smuggle into Israel illegal substances such as hashish, or goods, such as coffee, tea, sugar, and cigarettes, which were either rationed or heavily taxed. There was also some organized smuggling in the other direction.

Together with organized economic infiltration came the rapid emergence of organized politically motivated raiding. While such raids were only a small proportion of all infiltration, they provided the cutting edge that turned the phenomenon into a major military-political problem for Israel. The raiding—for revenge, sabotage, murder—was organized at various levels: A particular refugee clan chief would send former villagers to the site of their abandoned homes to wreak vengeance on the Jewish settlers or guards now there; Muslim Brotherhood, Arab Higher Committee, and Husayni agents funded and dispatched squads to kill Jews and damage

[111] The statistics for dead and wounded are in S. Teveth, *Moshe Dayan* (Tel Aviv, 1971), 430-1. The statistic for the dead in 1949 is in Shalev, *Shituf-Pe`ula*, 90.

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Jewish property; and Arab government officials and officers, whether on local initiative or central instruction, organized raids into Israel by refugees or local villagers, usually for political purposes, less often for intelligence-gathering.

A definitive description and assessment of both types of organized infiltration will be possible only after the Arab states open their political, military, police, and intelligence archives. But available documentation provides a sufficient basis for a rough examination of the origins, controllers, funding, and personnel involved in organized infiltration from the Arab states into Israel between 1949 and 1956.

Organized Economic Infiltration

Lebanon

Bands of infiltrators, some of them bedouin, organized by local Shiite dignitaries, operated along the Lebanese border in 1949-52, specializing in smuggling and robbery. There were also gangs of refugees, 'often connected to the [ex-]Mufti's agents in Beirut', who were primarily concerned with economic infiltration, but who would occasionally add 'revenge murders' and intimidation of Israeli Arabs to their activities.[112] One such gang, based in Rmaich, dealt mainly in smuggling people into Israel—to visit relatives, resettle, or steal. The gang, which also protected the infiltrators, charged I£2-6 per head per crossing and was apparently unhindered by the local Lebanese gendarmerie, whom it probably bribed.[113]

Egypt

According to Egyptian intelligence documentation, in 1950-1 a Gaza merchant organized a band of refugees each of whom was paid E£8 per raid to steal Israeli irrigation pipes and other equipment. Other enterprising Gaza businessmen organized groups of Muslim pilgrims going on the Haj to Mecca. The pilgrims were smuggled across the northern Negev 'waist' between Gaza and Hebron, and from there travelled south to the Jordanian-Saudi frontier, and thence to Mecca. Other professional smugglers guided refugees from Gaza who hoped to better their economic situation in the West Bank.[114]

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[112] 'Arab Infiltration into Israel', ed. Ne'eman, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph.

[113] Lt. É. Schwartz, Haifa District, to IDF Northern Command/Intelligence, 'Infiltration Report, 15.12.1949-15.1.1950', 24 Jan. 1950, IDFA $\frac{240/15}{115}$.

[114] Ya`ari, *Mitzrayim*, 9. According to Ya`ari, some of these refugees were caught and sent back by the Jordanians across the 'waist' to Gaza.

Jordan

A number of gangs, whose members were mostly refugees though some were border farmers who had lost their lands in the armistice agreement, operated along the West Bank border in the early 1950s. Some had already operated, in one form or another, in Mandatory days, and in 1949 and the early 1950s were re-formed and re-activated. Although these gangs were mainly economically motivated, their forays occasionally resulted in Israeli casualties.

One well-known gang in the early 1950s, composed of refugees from Lydda and Ramle and local inhabitants from Ramallah-E1 Bireh, was led by Omar Kamal al-Said Shahin, originally of Lydda, who lived in Ramallah. The gang lived on theft and smuggling, also guiding infiltrators who wanted to resettle in Israel. According to Israeli intelligence, the gang had 'good ties' with Jordanian police officers and the Jordanians allowed it to operate freely.[115]

A second gang was lend by Ibrahim al-Goj and his brother Zeidan, originally of Abu Shusha, near Kibbutz Gezer. Ibrahim had been active against the Jews during the Mandate and had served as an irregular in the Lydda-Ramle area in 1948. After the war, he settled in Ramallah and organized an armed band which specialized in cattle and sheep theft. The gang was based in Beit Surik, west of Jerusalem, and hid the stolen animals in caves in the hillsides before selling them to butchers in the Old City of Jerusalem and in Ramallah. National Guardsmen supplied the gang with intelligence. In 1950 the gang killed two Jews during attempted robberies in Motza, west of Jerusalem, and another during a further robbery attempt in Kvutzat Schiller, near Rehovot. In summer 1951, while taking back four stolen Israeli cows, the gang encountered an Israeli patrol, and Ibrahim and several gang members were killed. The gang continued operating under the command of Zeidan.[116]

During 1949-50 a large gang of refugees formed in Bethlehem, specializing in stealing telephone wire and, incidentally, sabotaging Israeli telephone lines. On 25 June 1950 the gang murdered a member of Mevo Beitar and kidnapped another. In July 1951 an IDF patrol captured several members while they were sabotaging telephone lines near Jerusalem.[117] In February 1952 IDF intelligence reported that a spate of thefts of animals and telephone wires and cables in the Jordan Valley and around Zikhron Ya`akov had been 'organized [as a business enterprise] by rich people [from Jenin, in the West Bank, and Shuneh, in the East Bank]'.[118]

The label 'organized' was often used by Israeli intelligence (and spokesmen) to describe certain instances of infiltration. Jordanian and British

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[115] 'Arab Infiltration into Israel', ed. Ne'eman, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid.

[118] 'Activity on the Borders, Jan. 1952', ISA FM 2428/7.

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spokesmen often disputed the term, maintaining that 'infiltration is carried out by individuals and small groups, frequently of children, who go over to steal'. They were particularly keen to 'disprove' that infiltrators were politically motivated and had crossed the border to kill and sabotage.[119]

Organized or not, some economic infiltrators benefited from informal 'arrangements' with local Jordanian officials and border guards. Thus, infiltrators captured in the Coastal Plain in 1951 told their Israeli interrogators that Jordanian National Guardsmen levied 5 grush (I£0.05) on every infiltrator passing their position on the way to the border; infiltrators seeking covering fire from the guardsmen paid 15 grush.[120]

Organized Political-Terrorist Infiltration: Political Parties and Organizations

Jordan

The former Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Mohammed Amin al Husayni, emerged from the rebellion of 1936-9 and the war of 1948 as the *bête noire* of the Israeli authorities and public, and was equally regarded as an abiding menace to their control of the West Bank by the Hashemite regime in Amman.

Both before and after 1948, the Yishuv was convinced that the ex-Mufti's hand was behind every anti-Jewish pogrom, murder, and act of sabotage. The Jordanian authorities, always apprehensive of the Palestinians, suspected that the ex-Mufti—and various Arab regimes—were sponsoring terrorism from Jordan against Israel in order to foment trouble between the two and to destabilize Hashemite rule. It was, therefore, natural that in 1949-50 both Israeli and Jordanian officials suspected a Husayni-Arab Higher Committee (AHC) link in each cross-border terrorist incident.

There were persistent suspicions in Amman and Jerusalem that the ex-Mufti and AHC had organized and were running a permanent anti-Israeli and anti-Hashemite underground in the West Bank. But no such organization was discovered between 1949 and 1956. The truth is somewhat more prosaic. The ex-Mufti had managed, through contact men and supporters in Jordan, to 'subcontract' occasional raids against Israel. Thus, he and the AHC would channel money to a local contractor, who would then

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[119] Furlonge to Ross, 9 Mar. 1953, PRO FO 371-104779 ER1091/82. For example, Israel believed that economic infiltration in 1951 in the Qalqilya area was organized by one of the town's notables, Sharif Qassim. Jordan disputed this ('Informal MAC Meeting Held at Mandelbaum Gate on December 6 1951', S. Ramati to M. Makleff, etc., ISA FM 2431/5).

[120] 'Robbery and Theft by Infiltrators', unsigned (possibly by Foreign Ministry Research Dept.), undated (but probably from 1951), ISA FM 2431/8. See also JTA (Tel Aviv, 20 Jan. 1955), Bulletin No. 101, 21 Jan. 1953, PRO FO 371-104765 R1073/2.

hire a band of refugees or border villagers to attack an Israeli target. Occasionally, a raid did take place, but often the contractor and/or his hired hands failed to deliver. Sometimes contractors hired existing (economic) infiltrator gangs for these political raids.[121]

In 1950, suspecting that the ex-Mufti's supporters, in concert with 'Egyptian agents', were active in Jordan, Amman sought Israeli cooperation in curbing their activities.[122] Glubb suspected that the ex-Mufti had been involved in recent terrorist infiltrations in the hope of 'embroiling Jordan with Israel', a view shared by Israeli military intelligence.[123] In mid-1951 Israel informed Jordan that Husayni had set up a system of infiltrator-messengers between the Gaza Strip and Hebron.[124] Jordan, for its part, believed that a series of infiltrator attacks in the 'Arava were the work of '[ex-]Mufti bands organized in the Sinai and in the Gaza Strip'.[125]

But it was difficult to substantiate these suspicions. Only in mid-1953 did Israeli intelligence at last identify and name an infiltrator gang as 'financed by [the ex-] Mufti'. The gang, said the Israelis, was led by one 'Doctor Rabah'—a dentist from Nablus—and an Arab Legion officer with a British wife. This gang, 'interested only in murder', was responsible for a recent killing in Tel Mond and a 'crime' at Azriel, the Israelis alleged.[126] Acting upon an Israeli tip, the Jordanians kept Rabah under surveillance and investigated his past—but apparently found nothing suspicious.[127]

During the second half of 1953 Jordanian intelligence identified one or more gangs of infiltrators run by 'a group of refugees in Damascus, all of them former terrorists employed by the [ex-]Mufti'. The Saudi Arabian government subsidized the group from anti-Jordanian motives. At the same time, the Saudi king 'was able to pose as a[n Arab] patriot', wrote Glubb.[128]

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[121] Ya`ari, *Mitzrayim*, 11.

[122] H. Uberall, intelligence officer Negev District, to IDF Intelligence Dept., etc., 2 Mar. 1950, ISA FM 2431/7.

[123] Glubb, *Soldier*, 250; K. Helm to Eden, 3 Dec. 1951, PRO FO 371-91387 EE1091/63.

[124] Harkabi, IDF Intelligence Dept., to deputy CGS, etc., 29 July 1951, ISA FM 2431/9.

[125] 'Inquiry on Case of 5 Israelis wounded at MR. 18470384 on the 21st of September 1951', Ramati to Makleff, etc., ISA FM 2431/9.

[126] F. Russell (Tel Aviv) to SecState, 26 May 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2; Evans (Tel Aviv) to FO, 4 June 1953, PRO FO 371-104783 ER1091/215; Russell to SecState, 22 June 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60.

[127] Tyler to SecState, 11 Aug. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[128] Glubb, *Soldier*, 305-6, 317. Ironically, Glubb initially believed that the summer 1953 attacks on Jewish villages (Tirat Yehuda, etc.) were 'due to internal Jewish feuds' or were deliberately mounted Israeli provocations, designed to suck Jordan into a war—or to 'raise more dollars in America' (Glubb to Melville, 12 June 1953 (two cables—D/366 and D/367), Glubb to Melville, 15 June 1953 (D/371), and Moore (Tel Aviv) to FO, 19 June 1953, all in PRO FO 371-104784).

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By 1954 Jordanian intelligence was able to name some of the ex-Muftirun terrorist infiltrator gangs. Prominent among them was one led by the Nazareth-born Sheikh Tewfik Ibrahim al Ghala'ini (alias 'Little Abu Ibrahim'), who had also been active during the British Mandate. In January, a band of infiltrators from Faqqu`a, in the Gilbo``a area, whom he had allegedly organized, was arrested by the Jordanians. In July, Jordanian intelligence named Jamal Husayni, the ex-Mufti's cousin, as the organizer of a band sent to sabotage an Israel Air Force base in the Jezreel Valley. The attack had failed.[129]

The Jordanian authorities were to conclude that political infiltration from Jordan into Israel, 'organized and supplied' from Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt, had begun at the beginning of 1953. 'Planning and provision of funds and material' was attributed to the ex-Mufti and his supporters. Jordanian (and British) intelligence identified four 'echelons' in the 'organization': (*a*) the leaders, headed by Husayni; (*b*) the 'liaison group', who travelled between Jordan and Beirut, Damascus, and Cairo, and maintained contact with the ex-Mufti's local followers; (*c*) the ex-Mufti's followers in Jordan, who chose the infiltrators, supplied them with arms and funds, and 'probably brief[ed] them on targets', and (*d*) the 'armed infiltrators' themselves.[130] But a year later Legion intelligence reported that there was no evidence that Husayni's efforts to recruit saboteurs in Jordan had actually led to raids.[131]

The Damascus group may have been organized and led by Zaki `Abdurrahim, a refugee from the Jaffa area who, Legion reports said, was in the Syrian capital in the employ of the ex-Mufti in 1950. In February 1955 the Legion named `Abdurrahim as 'a member of the ex-Mufti's special sabotage organization in Syria'. In August 1955 he was reported to have paid various individuals, on Husayni's behalf, to infiltrate into Israel.[132]

According to Arab Legion intelligence and the head of Jordan's Criminal Investigation Department, Colonel Coghill, by summer 1955 two 'terrorist gangs' linked to the ex-Mufti were operating from Damascus. One, run directly by him, may have been `Abdurrahim's. The other, financed by the Saudis, was organized by Jamal Husayni, the ex-Mufti's principal aide and cousin, and a Saudi government adviser in the 1950s. One of these gangs may have been responsible for an ambush of an Israeli vehicle

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[129] Ya`ari, *Mitzrayim*, 10.

[130] British Embassy (Amman) to Levant Dept., FO, 25 Oct. 1954, PRO FO 371-111094 R1078/6.

[131] H. A. Dudgeon (Amman) to P. A. G. Westlake (Tel Aviv), 13 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115906.

[132] T. Wikeley (Jerusalem) to C. B. Duke (Amman), 29 Oct. 1955, and Duke to Wikeley, 23 Dec. 1955, both in PRO FO 371-115908.

near Beisan in early April 1955. But both gangs apparently suspended operations in spring-summer 1955—for lack of funds, because of Jordanian protests or clamp-downs, or as a result of casualties suffered in an Israeli ambush.[133]

Western diplomats and intelligence agents in the Middle East kept regular watch on the ex-Mufti's whereabouts and activities. His visit to Syria at the beginning of December 1953 raised several suspicions— including one that he had come to encourage increased refugee infiltration into Israel.[134] The 'Islamic Conference' held in Jerusalem in December 1953 also excited fears in Amman of anti-Hashemite subversion and anti-Israeli terrorism, and the ex-Mufti was barred from attending. But the gathering was dominated by Husayni supporters and fans ('fanatical nationalist figures', in one British observer's phrase). Among the many conference resolutions was one enjoining Arabs/Muslims to prepare 'equipment' and 'mobilize' popular forces 'for positive struggle' against Israel, but no specific mention was made of infiltrator raiding.[135]

Husayni's move at that time from Heliopolis to Beirut was also viewed by Jordanian officials as a portent of increased activity on Israel's borders.[136] A year later Husayni visited Beirut again, and Jordanian intelligence learnt that he planned to 'fabricate' incidents in Israel, designed to entangle Jordan, and to assassinate Musa al `Alami, a prominent Palestinian-Jordanian politician living in Jericho.[137] A month later, in January 1955, Jordanian intelligence heard that the AHC planned renewal of large-scale infiltration into Israel.[138] In early 1956 Husayni was active in promoting the establishment of a Saudi-financed Palestinian brigade, composed of former (1948) Palestinian fighters. He visited Damascus in late January, where he conferred with Syrian President Shukri al Quwwatli and the director of Syrian intelligence, Brigadier Shawqat Shuqeir. Saudi Arabia had agreed to finance the project. Subsequently, Syria may have sent some officers to Jordan to recruit and train such a formation.[139] During his

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[133] 'Note on Infiltration from Jordan into Israel', Arab Legion HQ, 29 Apr. 1955, PRO FO 371-115899; Dudgeon to E. M. Rose, Levant Department, FO, 18 Aug. 1955, PRO FO 371-115903 VR1092/209; 'BMEO Weekly Political Summary No. 33 Week Ending Aug. 23, 1955', PRO FO 371-115464 V1013/37; Duke to FO, 19 Apr. 1955, PRO FO 371-115899.

[134] J. Moose jun. (Damascus) to State Dept., 8 Dec. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 1; Moose to State Dept., 17 Dec. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 1.

[135] 'Resolutions' of the Islamic Conference in Jerusalem, 3-9 Dec. 1953, PRO FO 371-110840 VR1781/1, and covering note, J. C. B. Richmond (Amman) to C. M. Le Quesne (Bahrain), 4 Jan. 1954.

[136] 'BMEO Weekly Political Summary No. 50 Week Ending Dec. 16, 1953', PRO FO 371-104188 E1013/52.

[137] Wikeley to FO, 13 Dec. 1954, PRO FO 371-111094.

[138] Ya`ari. *Mitzrayim*, 21.

[139] 'Syrian Activities', Arab Legion Intelligence, 30 Jan. 1956, PRO FO 371-121537; Duke to Rose, 4 Mar. 1956, PRO FO 371-121537 VJ1193/2; British Embassy, Damascus, to Levant Dept., 10 Apr. 1956, PRO FO 371-121538 VJ1194/3.

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Damascus visit, the ex-Mufti may also have tried to organize some infiltrator raiding into Israel via Jordan.[140]

In sum, it is difficult to quantify the ex-Mufti's contribution to the political-terrorist infiltration of 1949-56. Much of what happened—if it happened—happened in the shadows. Occasional intelligence reports—Israeli, Jordanian, and Western—do not provide a sufficient or accurate guide. And it served Jordanian (and, occasionally, Israeli) political purposes to detect the ex-Mufti's hand in every outrage. However, it is clear that the ex-Mufti and his supporters did periodically try to organize raids into Israel. Occasionally, they succeeded. But these efforts seem to have amounted to no more than a minute fraction of the violent infiltration into Israel during this period.

Much of the political raiding from Jordan was by gangs unaffiliated to 'national' Palestinian authorities. Several such gangs operated along the Jordan—Israel border in apparent independence of any political party or body. One such gang, led by Muhammad al Mansi and Jamil Muhammad Muharrab, refugees from the border village of Walaja, raped and murdered a Jewish girl in the Qatamon neighbourhood of Jerusalem in February 1951. Ten months later, on 4 December, the Mansi Gang abducted 18-year-old Leah Feistinger as she was walking from a bus stop in the Bayit VeGan neighbourhood of Jerusalem to her house in the former Arab village of A1 Maliha (Manahat). After raping and murdering her, they left her body in a cave, on the Israeli side of the line.[141] An IDF retaliatory raid failed to kill the gang (see below), and on 8 January 1952, Israel passed their names to the Jordanian authorities.[142] The Jordanians detained Mansi and brought him to a meeting of the IJMAC, where he denied responsibility for the murder. The Jordanians released him but kept him under surveillance.[143]

The Israelis suspected that Mansi was responsible for a further murder, in A1 Maliha, on 4 February 1952. A few days later, they informed the Jordanians that Mansi had purchased a quantity of gelignite,[144] but the

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[140] 'Syrian Activities', Arab Legion Intelligence, 30 Jan. 1956, PRO FO 371-121537. The foregoing may leave the reader with the impression that the ex-Mufti had a large following in Jordan and numerous active supporters and agents. This was not so. He probably enjoyed very little support on either bank of the Jordan (see Plascov, *Refugees, passim*).

[141] Ramati to deputy CGS, etc., 27 Dec. 1951, ISA FM 2949/16. R. Siton and Y. Shoshan, (*Anshei HaSod VeHaSeter* (Tel Aviv, 1990), 124-8) claim that they obtained the names of Feistinger's killers from one of their Arab agents in Beit Jala.

[142] Capt. A. Mitaki, Israel delegation to IJMAC, to deputy CGS, etc., *c*.8 Jan. 1951, ISA FM 2432/1.

[143] Siton and Shoshan (*Anshei*, 124-8) claim that during an intermission in the IJMAC meeting an Israeli intelligence officer, R. Timor, unsuccessfully tried to recruit Mansi. On the face of it, the story seems unlikely—unless it was part of a plot to lure Mansi to Israel to arrest him.

[144] Ramati to IDF Intelligence Dept., etc., *c*.10 Feb. 1952, ISA FM 2432/1.

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Jordanians had already confiscated the explosives, leaving Mansi reportedly boasting afterwards that he would soon replenish his stock.[145] It may have been this gang to which the British ambassador in Tel Aviv referred when he reported that most incidents in the Jerusalem Corridor in 1952 were the work of a 'single well-organized gang' from the Hebron-Bethlehem area.[146]

Another gang, which emerged in 1951, was led by Hassan `Ali `Abd Mustafa Samwili, who took part in some two dozen raids that left at least eighteen Israeli dead. There is no evidence that the gang was financed by the ex-Mufti or any other party. Initially, Samwili appears to have been an economic infiltrator. But in May 1952 his father-in-law was shot dead by Israeli troops, apparently during an infiltration raid, and Samwili swore revenge. The murders began on 4 June 1952, when the gang killed an Israeli guard and his wife in Motza, west of Jerusalem. Three further murders followed that year in `Ajjur, Talbiyeh—a Jerusalem neighbourhood—and Mishmar Ayalon. In 1953 the gang murdered an American tourist and his niece, Zvi and Dvorah Ganoyer, in Jerusalem (19 April 1953), two guards at Moshav Even Sapir in the Corridor (17 May 1953), and two IDF soldiers at Sataf (9 July 1953). Israel informed Amman of Samwili's activities during the second half of 1952, and he was briefly imprisoned by the Jordanians in 1953.[147] In September 1954, Israel handed the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and the Jordanians a list of the gang members' names, and Jordan reported that it was keeping Samwili under surveillance. After repeatedly evading Israeli capture, Samwili was mistakenly reported killed in November 1954.[148] Some while later, in 1955, he was in Beirut, where the Egyptians tried to recruit him as a Fedayeen.[149] By the end of 1955 or early 1956 Samwili was back in the West Bank, apparently active on both sides of the Jerusalem Corridor, and something of a 'national hero' to many West Bank Palestinians. On 19 March 1956 he was shot dead by an Israeli police patrol after murdering a settler at Moshav Naham, in the Corridor.[150]

Lebanon

Among the 'extremist organizations' that Glubb suspected of running infiltrators along Israel's borders in 1950 was the Muslim Brotherhood,

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[145] Ramati to IDF Intelligence Dept., 12 Feb. 1952, ISA FM 2432/1

[146] Evans to Ross, 7 Oct. 1952, PRO FO 371-98493 EE1091/86.

[147] Evans to FO, 4 June 1953, PRO FO 371-104783 ER1091/215; FM to Israel Mission (New York), 25 Oct. 1953, ISA FM 2949/2. See also D. Tal, 'HaTguvot HaYisraeliyot LaHistanenut LeShitha MiYarden U'miMitzrayim, 1949-1956', MA thesis (Tel Aviv, 1990), 126 n.

[148] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 599, entry for 7 Nov. 1954.

[149] Wikeley to Duke, 29 Oct. 1955, and Duke to Wikeley, 23 Dec. 1955, both in PRO FO 371-115908.

[150] Maj. A. Doron to Comm. E. J. Terrill, 3 May 1956, ISA FM 2436/4 bet.

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and perhaps also veterans of Fawzi al Qawuqji's Arab Salvation Army, which, defeated in October 1948, had been disbanded in Lebanon and Syria. An armed band of these veterans repeatedly crossed the Lebanese—Israeli border at the end of 1949 and in early 1950, terrorizing Israeli Arab villagers in Western Galilee and killing and wounding several, according to an Israeli complaint. The Israeli authorities feared that the gang might incite local Arabs against the state.[151]

Three years later, Israeli intelligence identified a new, politically motivated Palestinian gang in southern Lebanon. Composed of about a dozen refugees from the Galilee village of Saffuriya, they called themselves 'Servants of the Merciful' and were headed by a former captain in the pre-1948 Transjordan Frontier Force. The gang was apparently responsible for murdering two Jewish settlers in Tzipori (formerly Saffuriya) and an Arab who worked as an Israeli government official. They may also have been responsible for the murder of an Israeli Circassian, Muhammad Haj `Omar, a long-time agent of Yishuv and Israeli intelligence. According to the Israeli police, the gang also tried to recruit Israeli Arabs.[152] It is possible that a second gang, operating from Syria, composed of refugees from Safad and Nahaf, may have been responsible for some of these murders.[153]

Qawuqji himself, in 'retirement' in Beirut, was approached at least once—possibly by an emissary from Jamal Husayni and the Saudis—during the 1950s to organize raids into Israel. The aim may have been to cause trouble for Jordan as much as to strike at Israel. But the Lebanese 'neutralized' Qawuqji and the Syrians detained the Saudi go-between.[154]

In July 1954 Jamal Husayni apparently broke away from the ex-Mufti and began working directly for the Saudis. According to Jordanian intelligence, the Saudis, starting in January 1955, gave Jamal Husayni one million Lebanese pounds to finance sabotage raids across the Lebanese—Israeli border. But Husayni's middlemen pocketed the money and failed to produce any raids.[155]

Egypt

In early 1953 a series of minings alerted Israel to the possibility that an independent gang—'not in co-ordination with the Egyptian authorities'—was operating along the Gaza border. Israel pointed to the ex-Mufti. The

[151] 'Border Crossings', unsigned and undated (but from Nov. 1949), ISA FM 2432/7; and Capt. A. Friedlander to IDF Intelligence [Dept.] 9, etc., 19 Mar. 1950, ISA FM 2432/7.

[152] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 5 June 1953, BGA.

[153] Palmon to Lt.-Col. N. Argov, prime minister's aide de camp, 10 June 1953, ISA FM 2434/4.

[154] Duke to FO, 5 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115905 VR1092/319; Sir J. Gardener (Damascus) to FO, 25 Nov. 1955, PRO FO 371-115916 R1092/434.

[155] Ya`ari, *Mitzrayim*, 10-11.

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Egyptians agreed that Husayni had supporters and, saying that Cairo too was troubled by his activities, repeatedly asked that Israel provide them with intelligence on Husayni.[156]

Further south, along the Sinai—Negev border, in and around the DMZ, a gang called 'the Black Hand,' led by Suleiman al Dababa, began operations in early 1953, mainly against Negev bedouins. The Egyptians claimed that they were as interested as Israel in apprehending al Dababa.[157] In June, Israeli officers suspected that Black Hand members had been responsible for attacking an Israeli officer at Bir al Malaqi, in the DMZ.[158] By August, IDF intelligence was able to name names and point to a number of Tarrabin and `Azazme bedouin tribal leaders who regularly raided rival tribe encampments in Israel and the hashish convoys of neighbouring tribes. The gang lived in a sixty-tent concentration at Bir al Malaqi and was armed with several Bren machine-guns and some twenty-five rifles.[159]

In the second half of 1954, a gang of Muslim Brotherhood members was active along the Gaza Strip border, repeatedly blowing up Israel's water pipeline to the Negev settlements. In this, as in other cases, the Egyptian authorities maintained that they too opposed the Brotherhood's activities, which, they claimed, were designed 'to embarrass the Egyptian Government'.[160]

Organized Political-Terrorist Infiltration: States

Egypt

Despite Egyptian efforts to curb routine infiltration along the Gaza Strip border, Israeli intelligence had reports that by mid-1953 the Egyptians were employing a 'gang of mine-layers and saboteurs', brought from the Gaza Strip, in the A1 Auja DMZ. The gang used local bedouin of the Mahmadi'in tribe as guides.[161]

There is also evidence to suggest that as early as the end of 1953 or the first half of 1954, and with high-level authorization, Egyptian military

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[156] Lt.-Col. B. Harman to IDF General Staff officer for MACs, etc., 9 Apr. 1953, ISA FM 2438/6; Evans to Ross, 14 Apr. 1953, PRO FO 371-104779 ER1091/89.

[157] Harman to IDF General Staff officer for MACs, etc., 9 Apr. 1953, ISA FM 2438/6.

[158] 'Report on Meeting at 251100 at Kilometre 95', Capt. G. Neuberger to IDF General Staff officer for MACs, 25 June 1953, ISA FM 2438/6.

[159] 'Report on the Demilitarised Zone and its Inhabitants, 1948-53', unsigned (probably IDF Intelligence Branch), 12 Aug. 1953, ISA FM 2439/1.

[160] Maj. A. Rabkin to DMI, etc., 18 Nov. 1954, ISA FM 2438/6; 'Sabotage of the Water Pipeline near Mefalsim', Police Special Branch, undated, ISA FM 2952/3; Rabkin to DMI, etc., 28 Nov. 1954, ISA FM 2436/7 aleph; British Embassy (Cairo) to Shuckburgh, 26 Jan. 1955, PRO FO 317-115896 R1092/12.

[161] 'Report on the Demilitarized Zone and its Inhabitants, 1948-53', ISA FM 2439/1.

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intelligence had begun recruiting Jordanians for intelligence and sabotage operations against Israeli targets, although it appears that such recruitment was on a very limited scale. In mid-1955 Jordanian intelligence arrested a certain 'Sergeant A' of the Arab Legion on suspicion of working for Egypt. Sergeant A told his captors that, shortly after the October 1953 IDF raid on the West Bank village of Qibya, he had gone to the Egyptian Embassy in Amman to obtain a visa to visit a sick uncle in Gaza. The embassy first secretary, Izz ad Din Bek `Abdul `Aziz, had given him £10 and had instructed him to contact Major Fethi Dhib of Egyptian military intelligence in Cairo. After meeting Dhib, Sergeant A had returned to Jordan and been introduced to another Egyptian agent, 'Captain Qasim' of the Arab Legion. In June 1954 Qasim had visited the sergeant in Hebron, where he was stationed, and told him that he had received £150 from the Egyptian government 'with orders to organize bands of terrorists to infiltrate from Jordan into Israel'. Qasim gave Sergeant A and another sergeant £30 each to organize raids on Israel. According to an Arab Legion report, neither sergeant spent the money as instructed, and neither organized any infiltration.[162]

In autumn 1954 Israel attributed the recent 'grave deterioration' along the Israeli-Gaza border in part at least to 'centrally directed' operations by 'a branch of the Egyptian Intelligence Service' or 'an Egyptian military intelligence organization'. This charge was based mainly on the interrogation of infiltrators, but also, according to Sharett, on 'reports of a more secret nature'. Sharett said that, while he was prepared to believe that the 'Egyptian Government as such' was not involved, the Egyptian military intelligence headquarters for the Gaza Strip, commanded by Major Mustafa Hafez, clearly was.[163] In the course of 1954, Israel captured twenty-four 'agents' sent by the 'Egyptian authorities' to gather intelligence or commit acts of sabotage.[164] One of those captured was Hussein Hassan Faraj al `Abid, a Palestinian scout employed by Egyptian military intelligence in Gaza. He named other Palestinians run by Hafez. According to IDF intelligence, the scout and his colleagues were responsible for

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[162] 'The Case of Sergeant A of the Arab Legion', unsigned (but by Arab Legion Intelligence), 16 July 1955, PRO FO 371-115902. It is unclear whether Sergeant A's initial recruitment, at the end of 1953, was geared to terrorism in Israel or to anti-Jordanian espionage. The sergeant apparently told his Jordanian interrogators that he was recruited for anti-Israeli purposes—but that would have been preferable to admitting that he had agreed to spy for Egypt against Jordan. Whatever the case, in June 1954, Sergeant A, it appears, was instructed by the Egyptians to organize anti-Israeli terrorism.

[163] J. Nicholls (Tel Aviv) to P. S. Falla, Levant Dept. FO, 5 Nov. 1954, PRO FO 371-111107 VR1091/251; Nicholls to FO, 4 Nov. 1954, PRO FO 371-11106 VR1091/245; Sharett to Eilath, Eban, and Shiloah, 26 Oct. 1954 (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii 591).

[164] 'Background Note #21', Israel Embassy, Washington DC, Mar. 1955, ISA FM 2439/6.

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ambushes against Israeli traffic in April 1954 and the murder of a tractor driver near Kibbutz Ruhama on 4/5 September 1954.[165]

As distinct from this, repeated sabotage that year of the Negev water pipeline, which carried water to remote Jewish settlements, seems to have been the work of a Gaza branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.[166] The British ambassador to Tel Aviv defined these attacks as an organized campaign against the border settlements rather than 'simple gangsterism'. Sharett believed that Nasser could have quickly stopped the raiding from the Gaza Strip—had he wanted to.[167]

The Egyptian intelligence-sponsored infiltration during the year before the IDF's Gaza Raid culminated in the 23-5 February 1955 attacks in the Rehovot-Rishon LeZion area, in which an Israeli cyclist was murdered. That sortie was clearly an intelligence-gathering mission; the murder may well have been carried out by the scouts on their own initiative.[168]

Syria

During the early 1950s the Syrian authorities used infiltrators primarily to gather intelligence and, during the Hula Lake dispute, to fire at Israeli earth-moving equipment and cultivators in the demilitarized zones.

Syria used both soldiers, sent in civilian clothing and armed with light weapons,[169] and refugees who had been especially armed and instructed by the Syrian army. Syrian documents captured by Israel confirmed the existence of these state-organized refugee infiltrators. Thus, on 24 March 1951, the Syrian chief of staff gave orders for 250 refugees living in the Quneitra area of the Golan Heights to be transported to the disputed Hula Valley. There, dressed in civilian clothes and armed with light weapons, they were ordered to fire on Israeli workers.[170]

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[165] Maj. A. Har-Even in the name of DMI, to Eilan, 23 Dec. 1954, ISA FM 2436/7 aleph; Maj. Rosenius (Swedish army), UN observer, to chairman of EIMAC, 4 Dec. 1954, ISA FM 2436/7 aleph; 'Murder near Ruhama on 4.9.54', Police Special Branch, undated, ISA FM 2952/3.

[166] Rabkin to DMI, etc., 18 Nov. 1954, ISA FM 2438/6; 'Sabotage of Water Pipeline near Mefalsim', Police Special Branch, undated, ISA FM 2952/3; Rabkin to DMI, etc., 28 Nov. 1954, ISA FM 2436/7 aleph.

[167] Nicholls to Shuckburgh, 14 Dec. 1954, PRO FO 371-111107 VR1091/268.

[168] 'Special Report: The Gaza Incident—Summary and Sit. Assessment', IDF Intelligence Branch, 22 Mar. 1955, ISA FM 2454/5.

[169] 'Top Secret, the Security Situation on the Syrian Border', unsigned and undated (but probably by the head of the Security Department, Kibbutz Artzi, probably from early 1952), HHA 18.8 (15); 'Bulletin No. 10', Security Dept., Kibbutz Artzi, 14 Mar. 1952, HHA 18.11 (4).

[170] Shalev, *Shituf-Pe'ula*, 164.

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Jordan

During the years 1951-3, Israeli officials repeatedly claimed that some at least of the more lethal infiltration was being directed by the Jordan authorities, at a national or local level. At very least, they insisted, Jordanian officials and officers turned a blind eye or gave tacit approval to the infiltrators.

Clearly, it suited Israeli policies to attribute some measure of direct responsibility to Jordan, thus justifying Israel's retaliatory strikes. But the documentation makes clear that, with very rare exceptions, national and, by and large, local Jordanian authorities acted to prevent infiltration at most times and in most places, at least until the end of 1955, and that this was known and understood by the Israeli establishment. As one Israel Foreign Ministry official put it:

> For years the army [i.e. IDF] has been informing the Ministry and the outside world that infiltration is being sponsored, inspired, guided, or at least utilised by the Legion or other powers that be. However . . . when [we] asked [the army for] . . . some clear documentary proof of the [Arab] Legion's complicity [in the infiltrations] . . . no clear answer came from the army. Finally Fati [i.e. deputy DMI Yehoshafat Harkabi] told Leo [Savir, a senior Foreign Ministry official] and myself, on two *separate occasions*, that no proof could be given because no proof existed. Furthermore, Fati told me that having personally made a detailed study of infiltrations, he had arrived at the conclusion that Jordanians and especially the Legion were doing their best to prevent infiltration, which was a natural decentralised and sporadic movement. In fact, listening to Fati or his colleagues these days, one could almost mistake them for the British Foreign Office [which consistently argued in this vein].[171]

Jordanian intelligence does not seem to have employed infiltration for intelligence-gathering as extensively as did Syria or Egypt. Perhaps Glubb feared to provoke Israel. But, nevertheless, there were several such cases in the early 1950s. In one case, in November 1952, a squad of infiltrators was ambushed by an Israeli patrol and one was shot dead. The following

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[171] Eilan to Rafael, 4 Jan. 1954, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph. Eilan was not sure that Harkabi was right:

> I do not believe in this new version. I think that though the origins of infiltration were certainly economic, the Arabs seem to realise the value of this undeclared war against Israel, and have certainly encouraged it. . . . To the politicians in Amman and the Old City, infiltration is not only a useful weapon against Israel but also a welcome safety valve for the despair of the refugees and the recalcitrancy of the Palestinians.

Eilan went on to argue that, whatever the truth of the matter, as Israel's leaders had repeatedly gone on record asserting Jordanian official 'complicity, or at least . . . lack of Jordanian good will to stop infiltration', Israeli spokesman could not but continue 'to press the point of [Jordanian] complicity'. As he put it, 'if Jordanian complicity is a lie, we have to keep on lying. If there are no proofs, we have to fabricate them.' But Eilan seems to have believed in Jordanian complicity.

document was found on the body: 'To Whom it May Concern: The bearer of this permit Mahmud Suleiman—domiciled in Nablus—is acting on behalf of the Service. He should not be detained.' The pass was signed 'Intelligence Officer Western Bank' and dated 16 November 1952. According to Israeli intelligence, which had arranged the interception of the squad near the border, the infiltrators had been on a mission 'to murder an [IDF] officer in Israel on the night of 17/18 November'. It appears that Jordanian intelligence had identified and perhaps turned an Israeli agent, and had sent in a team to kill his controller.[172]

[172] 'Meeting on 9th December 1952, with Lt. Colonel Gaon to Discuss MAC Activities', Col. Roper, British military attaché, Tel Aviv, 12 Dec. 1952, PRO FO 371-98475.

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3
Arab Attitudes and Policies towards Infiltration, 1949-1955

Infiltration from Arab territory into Israel posed a serious dilemma for the Arab governments, armies, and local authorities. Border-crossings were provoking Israeli countermeasures which might lead to full-scale clashes resulting in disproportionate Arab casualties and, conceivably, further territorial losses. On the other hand, popular Arab feeling, including among local officials and military and paramilitary commanders, was sympathetic to the border-crossers. They, too, saw the fields and houses across the border—the objects of infiltrator sorties—as Arab property stolen by the Jews, and regarded Israelis who were robbed, injured, and, occasionally, murdered by infiltrators as brutal usurpers deserving their fate. The closer to the border and the lower in the Arab civilian and military hierarchies, the more sympathy was to be found for the Palestinian infiltrator, and the more hatred for the Israeli target of the marauders. West Bank and Gaza border villagers and the inhabitants of the refugee camps were naturally sympathetic towards the infiltrators, who, after all, were their own kith and kin.

Dayan, who, in his singular way, empathized with the Palestinians, phrased it thus:

> It is not easy for an Arab government and its forces to fight against infiltration. Most of the Arabs do not see theft from the stranger [i.e. the non-Arab] as a sin at all, and as to Israel—in the wake of the War of Independence [i.e. 1948], there had been added a will to revenge and feelings of enmity. . . . The Arab policeman has no facile answer when, coming to arrest an Arab from Qalqilya who is returning with a cow from Israel, he is asked [by the infiltrator]: 'What do you care if I steal a cow from [Kibbutz] Ramat-HaKovesh?' And the Egyptian soldier has no easy explanation when, coming to punish the Arab who killed a Jewish tractor driver in [Kibbutz] Ruhama . . . [the infiltrator] asks 'Why not kill a Jew?'[1]

[1] 'Pe`ulot Tzvaiyot BiYemei Shalom', Gen. Dayan, lecture to IDF officers, 1955. A senior Arab Legion commander, Fawwaz Bey Maher, made the same point when he told a British diplomat: 'it is politically impossible for any officer to say [to his troops] "you must not shoot at the Jews"; it is necessary to say "you mustn't shoot at the Jews now because we are not ready; save your ammunition and train yourselves for the day when you can be given the order"' (W. Wilson, British consulate general, Jerusalem, to R. H. Mason, Amman, 29 Aug. 1956, PRO FO 371-121551). An American diplomat put it more directly:

(Footnote continued on next page)

Local Arab officials often benefited materially from infiltration, sometimes receiving a percentage of the stolen or smuggled goods. The connection between infiltrators and local authorities was most apparent in the functioning of the Jordanian NG, whose members, in many cases, were relatives of the infiltrators. Not infrequently, NG units provided retreating infiltrators with covering fire and other assistance.[2]

Jordan

The years 1949-56 were characterized by massive infiltration, Israeli reprisals, Jordanian assurances to Israel that they opposed infiltration and were doing all they could to prevent it, and a singular failure by both countries' security forces to put an end to the phenomenon.

As far as Glubb and the Amman government were concerned, Jordanian policy between 1948 and early 1956 was consistent in attempting to halt infiltration because it provoked Israeli retaliation which, in turn, imperilled Jordan's army, territorial integrity, and regime. 'We are doing our best to prevent' infiltration, was Glubb's constant and sincere refrain, not only to UN and Western interlocutors but in internal correspondence with British officials and Arab subordinates.[3]

On 5 June 1950 senior Legion and Jordanian police commanders

(Footnote continued from previous page)

The average [Jordanian] magistrate, policeman or . . . Legionnaire takes a dim view of punishing a man who infiltrates to 'his own land' and possibly along the way shoots a Jew. Three years ago it was open season on Jews and visa [*sic*] versa . . . For the unsophisticated—as are most Jordanian agents of the law—infiltration is not a crime, it is a right. ('Israel-Jordan MAC: Increased Infiltration by Jordanians across the HJK-Israel Demarcation Line and Israeli Retaliation', S. R. Tyler jun. (Jerusalem) to State Dept., 13 Dec. 1951, NA RG 59, State Dept. Records, LM 60, Palestine and Israel, Foreign Affairs, Roll 2)

Glubb was surely exaggerating grossly when he wrote, in December 1953, that 'ninety-five per cent of the people of Jordan disapprove of infiltration into Israel'. Indeed, in the very same letter, he implicitly contradicted himself when he wrote that the Jordanian authorities were unable to cope with infiltration properly because 'a great part of the public' refused to co-operate (Glubb to Hutchison, 31 Dec. 1953, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-45, HJK-IJMAC, Current 1954).

[2] 'Public opinion in Jordan is not opposed to infiltration into Israel . . . The Israelis do not expect the Jordanian NG to have any zest for preventing fellow-villagers from crossing the border; on the contrary, the NG frequently turns out in support of Arabs who are in trouble on or over the border' (British Embassy, Tel Aviv, to Eden, FO, 3 Dec. 1951, PRO FO 371-91387 EE1091/63).

[3] Glubb to A. S. Kirkbride, 28 June 1950, PRO FO 371-82205. In his memoirs (*Soldier*, 285,288) Glubb asserted that the Legion and the Jordanian police—which was under Legion control—relentlessly endeavoured to curb infiltration, that 'the [Legion's] officers and men . . . realized that infiltration did not seriously injure the Israelis' and that 'it gave the latter an excuse to deliver military reprisal attacks'. Action against infiltrators had made the Legion the butt of continuous attack by Arab governments, organizations, and media, who 'never ceased to denounce [its] treachery'.

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devoted a long meeting to ways of curbing infiltration. Participants evinced sympathy for border villagers who grazed flocks and picked oranges on land that had been 'theirs for countless generations'. A few proposed that the Legion respond to Israeli retaliatory attacks with 'reprisals', such as 'shelling . . . Tel Aviv'. But the majority opted for a posture that would not invite 'a renewal of active [Jordanian-Israeli] hostilities'. The participants recommended that both countries withdraw their armed forces five kilometres from the frontier, leaving the curbing of infiltration to police forces; that all refugee camps be removed twenty kilometres from the frontier; that village mukhtars be obliged to take responsibility for refugees resident in or near their villages and that refugees for whom no mukhtar would take responsibility be removed twenty kilometres from the frontier; that mukhtars be appointed in the refugee camps and that they inform on any refugee away from camp 'without legitimate reasons'; 'all mukhtars of villages be made to give written undertakings to prevent their villagers from infiltrating into Jewish territory, stealing or smuggling'; that Jordanian and Israeli policemen establish contact during incidents, with an eye to identifying infiltrators and returning stolen property; that the local Jordanian administrators be given 'judicial powers of imprisonment and fines' to 'deal summarily' with infiltrators; that patrols of both countries meet regularly and exchange information; that Jordan establish additional police posts along the frontier; that additional patrol vehicles be deployed; that non-commissioned police officers be appointed to head NG patrols; and that the border be marked 'with heaps of whitewashed stones'.[4]

Jordan widely publicized the punishments meted out to infiltrators, and, occasionally, mukhtars who failed to inform the authorities about infiltrators were dismissed.[5] During 1949-51 the authorities exerted pressure on the refugees in camps, towns, and villages along the armistice line to move eastward, preferably to the East Bank. Following the 5 June 1950 meeting, the Jordanian defence minister ordered the transfer of all refugees to camps and towns at least twenty kilometres east of the border. But the order was only partially carded out, and many refugees continued to live on the border.

This 'thinning-out' policy, which resulted in the enlargement of the camps to the east in the Jordan Valley and around Amman, was greeted with mixed feelings by the refugees. Some preferred to remain along the

[4] 'Minutes of Meeting Held at HQ 1 Div. on 5 June 1950', Lt.-Col. W. A. Salmon, GSO I, Arab Legion HQ, PRO FO 372-82204. The participants included Glubb, Brigadier S. A. Cooke, the assistant commander 1 Division, Brigadier J. O. M. Ashton, OC 3rd Infantry Brigade, Col. Raddi Bey 'Ennab, chief of police Jerusalem District, and Lt.-Col. Mahammed Bey al Mai'ta, the commander of the Nablus District. Colonel Bennett de Ridder, the Belgian chairman of the IJMAC, also attended the meeting, whose purpose may have partly been to convince the UN observer of Jordan's resolve to combat the infiltration.

[5] Plascov, *Refugees*, 75-6.

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border, close to their original homes and lands. Others were tempted by the promised better conditions inland.[6] Some refugees appear to have been moved out of border towns a year or so later and concentrated in camps further from the border. In Qalqilya, a local unit was recruited to patrol the border, and a Legion platoon was sent in to curb infiltration. A new licensing system forbade those who had no licence to move oranges out of the town (the suspicion being that Qalqilya was a staging post for infiltrators stealing oranges from groves in Israel and selling them in Nablus, Ramallah, and Amman).[7]

Ahmad Bey Khalil, the senior Jordanian delegate to the IJMAC, who opposed infiltration as much as Glubb, repeatedly assured the Israeli delegates of Amman's resolve to curb the marauding. Following a series of Israeli reprisal raids on Arab villages in 1951, his assistant, Major Shara, told the Israelis that the Jordanians were 'acting against infiltrators as well as they could'. If Israel would hand over lists of villagers suspected of infiltration, 'he would be ready to take special precautionary measures'.[8]

Two days later, on 20 July, King `Abdullah was assassinated by a Palestinian gunman at A1 Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem. 'There would be no changes in [Jordan's] MAC policy,' Khalil quickly informed the deputy head of IDF intelligence, Lieutenant-Colonel Harkabi. When Harkabi complained that Jordan was 'not doing enough to prevent the infiltration', Khalil said that he would bring before the Jordanian Cabinet Israel's proposals for curbing infiltration, 'which was also in [Jordan's] interest'. Harkabi proposed to increase Legion patrols, to impose more severe punishments on infiltrators, and to make sure that all Legion officers knew that curbing infiltration was government policy.[9]

Khalil's successor, Ahmad Touqan, also appears to have strongly opposed infiltration—if only because not to do so would adversely affect Jordan. Israel, Touqan believed, was 'legitimately' aggrieved because of the 'large-scale Arab infiltration, in some cases involving killing'. But he took issue with Israel's reprisals policy.[10] In March 1952 Touqan proposed a series of legislative steps to curb infiltration—more or less in line with Israeli proposals, and apparently agreed to by the Jordanian prime minister, Tawfiq Abul Huda. The 'disciplinary action against confirmed

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[6] Plascov, *Refugees*, 76-9. It is unclear how many refugees actually moved or were moved during 1949-51 from sites along the demarcation line to the heart of the West Bank, the Jordan Valley camps, or the East Bank.

[7] 'Informal MAC Meeting Held at Mandelbaum Gate on December 6 1951', S. Ramati to M. Makleff, etc., undated, ISA FM 2431/5.

[8] 'Report on Informal Meetings of Israel and HJK [Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan] Members on the 17th and 18th July', Ramati, undated, ISA FM 2431/9.

[9] Y. Harkabi to deputy CGS, etc., 29 July 1951, ISA FM 2431/9.

[10] A. D. Fritzlan (Amman) to SecState, 29 Feb. 1952, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

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infiltrators might include removal of whole families and larger groups from the areas adjacent to the armistice lines to the Jordan Valley or even more remote points', Touqan suggested.[11].

But Touqan's views and proposals went far beyond what the Jordanian consensus would countenance. At the end of May, he was forced to resign after committing Jordan, in talks with Israeli and UN representatives, to an arrangement which would have alleviated the plight of Jordanian farmers in the Latrun Salient in exchange for a small concession of land to Israel. But behind the resignation lay his displeasure with Jordanian border policy in general and the non-passage of his anti-infiltration proposals.[12]

Following `Abdullah's death, there was a loosening of the reins in Amman. The rule of his deranged son, Talal, lasted barely a year before Talal was replaced by his son, Hussein, in August 1952. Until Hussein came of age, in May 1953, Jordan was governed by a Regency Council whose rule was marked by continuing internal crises and weak government. British diplomats attributed the failure to control infiltration at this time in part at least to this weakness, for, while continuing to adhere to an anti-infiltration policy, the regency shied away from taking measures that would antagonize the local population.[13]

Through the 1950s Jordan insisted that infiltration was a matter for the police rather than the armies of the two states. Israel, however, believed infiltration was a terrorist problem, to be solved by military action on both sides.

Some measures proposed at the June 1950 Arab Legion meeting were eventually implemented in December 1951, though Amman balked at the complete removal of the refugees twenty kilometres from the border.[14] Meetings designed to win the mukhtars' co-operation were only partially successful. Although certain mukhtars did succeed in preventing infiltra-

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[11] Fritzlan (Amman) to SecState, 5 Mar. 1952, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[12] Tyler (Jerusalem) to State Dept., 3 June 1952, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, Box 6, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan; A. S. C. Fuller (Jerusalem) to State Dept., 'April-May Report on the Israeli-Jordanian Border', 6 June 1952, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2. Tyler, the American consul in Jerusalem, explained Touqan's resignation thus: 'Touqan informed me [his] reason [for] resigning MAC due [to] his inability to get Jordan Cabinet to agree to stronger anti-infiltration law and carry out settlement Qalqilya and Latrun problems he has arranged with [Lt.-Col.] Ramati' (Tyler to State Dept., 29 May 1952, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan 1952).

[13] Lt.-Col. H. Gaon, IDF General Staff officer for MACs, to OC General Staff Branch, etc., 3 May 1953, ISA FM 2949/18.

[14] Cap. M. Taranto, IJMAC, to IDF General Staff officer for MACs, 7 Dec. 1951, ISA FM 2431/9; 'Informal MAC Meeting Held at Mandelbaum Gate on December 6 1951', Ramati to Makleff, etc., undated, ISA FM 2431/5; A. R. Walmsley (Jerusalem) to Eastern Department, FO, 17 Dec. 1951, PRO FO 371-91387 EE1091/65.

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tion from their villages,[15] for the most part they reported to the authorities on infiltration only 'selectively', IDF intelligence reported.[16] A bill approved by the Jordanian Cabinet providing for 3-15 years' imprisonment for infiltration was rejected in February 1952 by the Jordanian legislature.[17]

Nevertheless, these measures do seem to have had at least some temporary effect. According to Israeli officials,

> the Jordan authorities seem to have made strenuous efforts to stop infiltration . . . and although it continues on a serious scale, it has fallen off considerably: by about one quarter along the whole frontier and by one half in the Qalqilya area.[18]

But by March 1952 the Israelis were complaining that infiltration had returned to its previous high level.[19]

The increase in violent infiltration incidents in 1949-50 resulted in a spate of Jordanian-Israeli meetings designed to augment the machinery of the Mixed Armistice Commission (MAC). Meetings became more frequent and were held at higher levels with each upsurge of violence and particularly after IDF retaliatory strikes. The arrangements reached between local level officials on such problems as infiltration, line demarcation, and harvesting, were formalized in Local Commanders Agreements (LCAs).

On 4 June 1950 Israeli and Jordanian representatives agreed on daily joint border patrols along some sectors of the front. But these never took place and, from the start, Israel was unhappy with the idea:

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[15] 'The Activity on the Borders: Summaries and Conclusions for the Month of Jan. 1952', IDF Intelligence Dept., 19 Feb. 1952, ISA FM 2428/7.

[16] Cap. A. Mitaki, Israel Delegation to IJMAC, to IDF Intelligence Dept., 16 May 1952, ISA FM 2432/2. The Jordanian measures of Dec. 1951 are also discussed in 'Israel-Jordan MAC: Increased Infiltration by Jordanians Across the HJK-Israel Demarcation Line and Israeli Retaliation', Tyler to State Dept., 13 Dec. 1951, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll. 2.

[17] 'A Law Prohibiting the Crossing of the Jordan-Israel Armistice Boundaries', Foreign Ministry Research Dept., 6 Dec. 1951, ISA FM 294912; A. R. Walmsley (Jerusalem) to Eastern Department, FO, 17 Dec. 1951, PRO FO 371-91387 EE1091/65; Evans (Tel Aviv) to Eden, FO, 17 May 1952, PRO FO 371-98485 EE1081/4. Glubb's judgement was that

> the Jews themselves . . . were principally responsible for the rejection of this law. The public in Jordan wanted to know why unfortunate destitute refugees should be sentenced to 15 years prison for crossing the demarcation line when Israeli soldiers freely crossed into Jordan under the orders of their government, with the sole object of killing Jordanians or blowing up their houses. It must be admitted that there is something in this argument. The Jews can either take the law into their own hands, or ask the Jordan Government to cooperate by legislation or other action. But the two courses cannot be followed simultaneously. Jewish killings and shootings so provoke public opinion in Jordan as to make it impossible for the Jordan Government to meet the Jews half way. ('A Note on the Situation in Jordan', 1 July 1952, PRO FO 371-98861.)

[18] Evans (Tel Aviv) to A. D. M. Ross, Eastern Department, FO, 1 Feb. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490 EE1091/13.

[19] Evans to FO, 11 Mar. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490.

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> The Jordanian authorities can impose their will on their citizens, if they so desire . . . Our opinion is that neither joint patrols—which have a mainly administrative value—nor marking the border are the solution, but vigorous action [by Jordan] against the infiltrators in their places of residence.[20]

Joint patrols were briefly attempted along the Israeli-Egyptian border, but with little success. Patrols of ten horse-mounted policemen, five from each side, were instituted by Israel and Egypt on 12 April 1949 but seem to have stopped in early May, with Israel arguing that they were ineffective in curbing infiltration. Protracted UN-mediated negotiations led to their resumption at the end of 1949, with four jeeps from each side. But these too were soon abandoned, after three of the Israeli vehicles were mined on their way to the assemply point. Joint patrols along the Gaza-Israel border were resumed sporadically in 1950, but were abandoned each time after serious incidents.[21] One Israeli official later explained that 'we refused [to] carry on mixed patrols [and] border marking which . . . [were] unable [to] stem mass penetration [i.e. infiltration] and only distract attention from [the] prime cause'.[22]

On 3 August 1950 Israeli and Jordanian officials again agreed on the need for joint border patrols.[23] But, again, they seem never to have materialized. On 15 February 1951, following a major increase in border violence (including IDF retaliatory raids), the two countries' deputy chiefs of staff, Mordechai Makleff (Israel) and Colonel 'Abd al Qadir Pasha al Jundi, agreed on 'necessary measures to prevent repetitions of infiltration across the border', including the need for regular meetings of local commanders, telephone contacts, and prisoner exchanges, and the need to return livestock stolen by infiltrators.[24]

At further meetings on 27 February and 5 March representatives of the two countries agreed on regular weekly or bi-weekly meetings between sector commanders at five points, the understanding being enshrined in an LCA. The LCA was renewed (and marginally altered) over the following two years—in April 1951 (when the sides agreed to set up a permanent telephone link between local commanders); and 1 September 1951; and on

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[20] Quoted in Shalev, *Shituf-Pe`ula*, 90-1, 415 nn. 18-22; J. E. Chadwick (Tel Aviv) to FO, 8 Sept. 1950, PRO FO 371-82207 E1091/117.

[21] For the rare references to the joint patrols in the available documentation, see Military Attaché (Tel Aviv) to Army Dept., 4 Apr. 1950, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 3; Military Attaché (Tel Aviv) to Army Dept., 17 June 1950, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 3; Military Attaché (Tel Aviv) to Army Dept., 20 May 1950, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 3. The joint patrols seem to have been finally abandoned, after a further incident, in late June or July 1950. In late summer or autumn 1950 Israel turned down a last Egyptian request to renew the patrols (W. Riley to A. Cordier, 17 Oct. 1949, UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0-1; A. Leriche to H. Vigier, 15 June 1955, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-96, EIMAC 1955).

[22] M. Comay to Israel Embassy, London, 8 Sept. 1950, ISA FM 2592/18.

[23] R. A. Gibson (Jerusalem) to SecState, 3 Aug. 1950, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 2.

[24] K. Helm (Tel Aviv) to FO, 16 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/26.

31 January 1952. The latter agreement—which specifically provided for the prevention of 'all illegal crossings of the line'—prohibited 'firing on persons suspected of having crossed the line unless they resisted arrest', and firing in the direction of the border; provided for daily meetings between local commanders at nine or more points along the border to co-ordinate the struggle against infiltration; and called for the return of stolen property.[25] On 5 March 1952 the two sides signed an addendum to the LCA, providing for the exchange of information on 'stolen property, infiltrators and matters which will bring about a better condition of peace and quietness . . .' and the trial of infiltrators handed over to either side.[26]

Following what Israel saw as the LCA's failure, it was temporarily suspended at the end of April, but renewed on 13 May 1952. Israel seems simultaneously to have reactivated its free-fire policy along the West Bank border, for at the end of May 1952 Glubb reported that incidents of border cultivators and crossers being killed by IDF fire had dramatically increased. Israel, he complained, had refused to include a 'no-shooting' clause in the latest LCA.[27]

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[25] R. Dafni to director general, FM, 4 Feb. 1952, ISA FM 2402/12; untitled, unsigned, undated memorandum (possibly by IDF Intelligence Dept., probably from mid-1952), ISA FM 2432/2, analysing the 31 Jan. 1952 LCA and its implementation over Feb.-Apr. 1952. The analysis explains that Israel entered into the agreement in part because of the 'great tension' caused by the IDF's retaliatory raids (Sharafat, Beit Jala) and

> it appeared that we would have to stop the retaliatory strikes . . . under foreign pressure or as a result of a reactive operation by the [Arab] Legion. It was therefore necessary (*a*) to relieve the tension; (*b*) to force the Jordanians to take special steps in return for our stopping our activities, which in any case had to cease for a certain period.

In other words, Israel felt obliged, because of international pressure, to halt the retaliatory strikes for a time. Meanwhile, signing the LCA would compel the Jordanians to try to curb the infiltrators. Thereafter, Israeli and Jordanian officers met regularly; 'the atmosphere was generally friendly'. But the agreement and its implementation had only a moderate effect on the situation. Israel began returning detained (and dead) infiltrators at the Mandelbaum Gate in Jerusalem. The Jordanians 'began to return a small proportion of the stolen property'. There was a '25 per cent drop' in 'criminal infiltration but the routine [economic infiltration] continued. There were no substantial fluctuations in the cross-border trespassing.' Different patterns emerged in the different sectors of this border. In the north, around Jenin, there was a substantial decrease; to the West, along the Little Triangle, infiltration remained the same; in the Jerusalem Corridor, there was no change, though the previous IDF retaliatory strikes had caused a decrease. The Jordanians began to keep an eye on past or potential infiltrators. Moreover, two local Jordanian commanders who had taken bribes from infiltrators were replaced 'as a result of pressure by us'. All in all, however, Jordan's stepped-up border activities left little mark: infiltrators still crossed in large numbers; NG commanders continued to take bribes; infiltrators were still punished insufficiently (in Israeli eyes); and there was too little organized effort to persuade the border villages to prevent infiltration. Hence, the memorandum recommended that Israel discontinue the agreement and resume the free-fire policy against infiltrators. See also Evans (Tel Aviv) to Eden, 17 May 1952, PRO FO 371-98485 EE1081/4.

[26] 'Agreement on Measures to Curb Infiltration between Israel and Jordan', signed by Ramati (Israel), Ahmad Bay Touqan (Jordan), and Col. de Ridder (UN), ISA FM 2592/18.

[27] Glubb to Fritzlan, 29 May 1952, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2; G. W. Furlonge (Amman)

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A new LCA signed on 13 November 1952 was almost identical to that of 31 January, except that it was explicitly in force for only '30 days' and forbade all firing at border-crossers 'during daytime' unless they were resisting arrest.[28] The agreement was renewed once more the following year, on 8 June 1953, and again, for the last time, for three months, on 16 February 1954. But, for all practical purposes, the LCAs expired in the months between the IDF's Qibya raid in October 1953 and the Scorpions Pass Massacre of Jewish bus passengers by Arab infiltrators in March 1954. Tension between the two countries, and between their armies, had become such that LCAs, which in large measure depended on friendly relations between local commanders, had become impracticable.[29]

All in all, the LCAs produced no major, overall reduction in infiltration. Indeed, in the last fifteen months of the agreements up to spring 1954, terroristic infiltration against Israel and IDF reprisals against Jordan increased amid a general deterioration in bilateral relations.

In the effort to bolster co-operation, Israel periodically handed Jordan lists of infiltrators whom Israeli intelligence suspected of involvement in serious crimes on Israeli soil. Thus, in mid-1950 Israel asked Jordan to arrest Issa Yousuf A1 Yam, Moussa Mohammed Ali, and Mustafa Ali Mohammed, all from the village of Jib, suspected of the murder of an Israeli settler at Mevasseret Yerushalayim on 17 March 1950, and to arrest Mahmoud Hassoun, of the village of Al Burj, for the murder of a member of Kibbutz Tzor`a. But the Jordanians, the Israelis charged, 'took no action', and this pattern was repeated over the years.[30] The Jordanians, for their part, regularly complained that the Israelis failed to co-operate and to provide them with information about infiltration and infiltrators.[31]

Up to the end of 1952, Israeli officials also submitted to Amman lists of

(Footnote continued from previous page)

to Ross, 5 June 1952, PRO FO 371-98491 EE1091/28. Glubb believed that the LCAs were useful and effective in reducing infiltration. But he understood that no amount of co-operation could stop infiltration completely. Glubb thought local Jewish commanders believed in the virtues of co-operation but were stymied 'by the higher Jewish authorities' ('A Note on the Situation in Jordan', Glubb, 1 July 1952, PRO FO 371-98861).

[28] 'Agreement to Reduce and Solve Incidents along the Demarcation Line', 13 Nov. 1952, PRO FO 371-104784.

[29] 'A Survey of the Local Commanders Meetings, 27.2.51-23.3.54', unsigned (but probably by Israel Foreign Ministry), undated, ISA FM 2428/1 bet; 'Memorandum: Arab-Israel Frontiers', unsigned (but probably by British Army, from Dec. 1953), PRO FO 371-104791; Furlonge to Ross, FO, 5 June 1952, PRO FO 371-98491 EE1091/28.

[30] Israel Government statement, 1 Sept. 1950, PRO FO 371-82207 E1091/144; 'Report on a Meeting', Capt. A. Mitaki, Israel delegation to IJMAC, to IDF Intelligence Dept. etc., 16 May 1952, ISA FM 2432/2; Maj. S. Nutov to Jordanian Delegation, IJMAC, 16 June 1953; 'Tentative Summary of Infiltration on Jordanian Border (from 8.6.53 until 18.7.53)', unsigned (but probably IDF Intelligence Branch), undated, ISA FM 2402/12.

[31] Glubb to Riley, 8 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/23.

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West Bank residents 'trafficking in stolen goods' and of 'subordinate officials' who accepted bribes from and protected infiltrators. When the Jordanians apparently did nothing, the Israelis discontinued the practice.[32] Moreover, it was only in a very small number of cases that Jordan returned Israeli property stolen by infiltrators; much was never found and some that was presumably ended up in the hands of Jordanian officials.

According to Israeli spokesmen, infiltrators caught by Jordan or expelled by Israel to Jordan were often set free or only lightly punished.[33] According to the British ambassador in Tel Aviv (writing in 1952), 'the longest sentence imposed by the Jordan courts on convicted infiltrators is . . . 60 days' imprisonment'.[34] The Jordanians at this time occasionally punished infiltrators with a twenty-five-piastre fine or twenty days' imprisonment.[35] Glubb himself admitted that 'punishment meted out to infiltrators is frequently insufficient to act as a deterrent'.[36] Khalil similarly admitted that the punishments were too light. But they became more severe after `Abdullah's assassination, he said.[37]

During 1950-2 Jordan did step up the capture and prosecution of infiltrators (usually caught on their way back), and thousands went on trial each year. In 1950, according to Glubb, '589' infiltrators were tried in the 'Jerusalem area' alone. Of these, 246 received short prison sentences and 280 were fined. Similar trials, he said, took place in the Nablus and Hebron districts.[38] During the period December 1950-February 1952, 2,575 persons were tried and convicted of infiltration by Jordanian courts.[39] Between January 1952 and September 1953 the figure was 3,145 persons tried and 2,500 convicted.[40] At one point, according to Glubb, 'half the men in prison in West Jordan were serving terms . . . for infiltration'.[41] But Israel complained that the (light) sentences failed to deter.[42].

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[32] British Embassy, Tel Aviv, to British Embassy, Amman, 7 Apr. 1953, PRO FO 371-104779. See also list with covering note, Shalev to Bennike, 16 Oct. 1953, ISA FM 2429/5; Maman to Israel delegation to UN, 25 Oct. 1953, ISA FM 2949/2.

[33] In May 1952, for example, Israel complained that on 5 Mar. it had handed over 25-year-old Yussef ben Mahmoud Ahmed Abriyoush. A month later he was again arrested in Israel. The Jordanians had, apparently, not punished him for the first infiltration (Maj. S. Nutov, Israel delegation to IJMAC, to Maj. Mohammed Bey Ishaq, HJK delegation to IJMAC, 2 May 1952, ISA FM 2432/1).

[34] Evans to Eden, 17 May 1952, PRO FO 371-98485 EEl081/4.

[35] Harkabi to IDF CGS, etc., 6 Aug. 1951, ISA FM 2431/9.

[36] Furlonge to Ross, 5 June 1952, PRO FO 371-98491 EE1091/28.

[37] Harkabi to IDF CGS, etc., 6 Aug. 1951, ISA FM 2431/9.

[38] Glubb to Riley, 8 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/23.

[39] Unsigned and undated mem. (probably by British Embassy, Amman), PRO FO 371-104780.

[40] 'Notes on General Horrocks' Report', P. S. Falla, 3 Dec. 1953, PRO FO 371-104806 ER1201/14G.

[41] Glubb, *Soldier*, 323.

[42] British Embassy, Tel Aviv, to Eden, FO, 3 Dec. 1951, PRO FO 371-91387 EE1091/63.

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Glubb and other Jordanian officials made great efforts to convince Israel that Jordan opposed infiltration and was doing everything to curb it. 'The vital thing is to convince the Jews that the Jordan government does its best to prevent infiltration, and that the best policy for them [Israel] is to cooperate with us,' wrote Glubb to Kirkbride, under the impact of the IDF raids against Falama and Sharafat in early 1951.[43] A copy of a letter from Glubb to UNTSO chief of staff Riley giving the number of infiltrators Jordan had jailed was secretly passed by British officials to the Israelis, who, it was reported, were duly 'impressed'. The Israeli authorities 'now realized that people on the other side [i.e. Jordan] were genuinely trying to improve things', according to the British ambassador to Tel Aviv, Knox Helm. This contributed to the success of the Jordanian-Israeli talks in February-March, which led to the LCAs.[44]

Israel was persuaded of Glubb's sincerity by its own intelligence sources. As one Israeli intelligence official put it: 'the Jordanians are truly interested in curbing the infiltration . . . and are taking steps—in their fashion—to stop it. It is beyond doubt that the infiltration is not organized, directed, or encouraged by the responsible Jordanian authorities . . .'.[45] Israeli intelligence intercepted messages from local Arab Legion commanders ordering their units to punish infiltrators. But the Legion was spread too thinly, and too often local non-commissioned officers co-operated with the infiltrators.[46]

The Jordanians were certainly not doing enough. But Israeli spokesmen went further and charged the Jordanian authorities, at various levels, with complicity, either out of political sympathy or because of financial benefit.[47]

Israeli intelligence about NG-infiltrator co-operation at this time was very precise—partly because it came from knowledgeable Jordanian officials. Thus, at a meeting with an IDF intelligence officer in February 1952, Touqan explained that infiltrating West Bank 'children pay ten piastres to the National Guardsmen for permission to go across [the border] and return'. Similarly, Touqan gave information about a recent skirmish in the Qalqilya area in which an NG position had fired at an IDF patrol busy chasing two infiltrators. 'After a while it transpired that each of the [infiltrators] had paid half a pound to the National Guardsmen so that these would protect them as they ploughed a field in our territory,' an

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[43] Glubb to Kirkbride, 17 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91386. Infiltration, wrote Glubb, was 'not guerrilla warfare by organised bands of desperadoes' but 'chiefly petty thefts by poor refugees'.

[44] Helm to Kirkbride, 2 Apr. 1951, PRO FO 371-91386.

[45] Yair Elgom, Foreign Ministry Research Dept., to M. Gazit, Israel Embassy, London, 25 May 1953, ISA FM 2592/18.

[46] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 5 July 1951, BGA.

[47] 'Robbery and Thefts by Infiltrators', unsigned (possibly by Foreign Ministry Research Dept.), undated (from 1949 or 1950), ISA FM 2431/8.

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Israeli officer reported.[48] The following month, the officer informed the, military attachés in Tel Aviv that 'the fee payable by infiltrators to Jordan frontier guards for turning a blind eye' had risen from ten piastres per head to one and a half dinars.[49]

Israeli officials and British diplomats often suspected that the variety of attitudes displayed by local Jordanian officers and officials towards infiltration was influenced by Jordanian politics. The British ambassador in Amman, Furlonge, in trying to explain the 'inconsistencies' in Jordanian reactions, suggested that 'they are . . . very largely conditioned by the internal political situation' in Amman at any given moment. If the opposition was strident, the regime in Amman was likely to take a tough line with Israel and a soft line with infiltrators, to demonstrate that 'they are not backward in defending Jordan interests.'[50]

The regime's weakness during 1951-3 and later, as Hussein gradually learnt to rule and to fend off internal and external challenges (especially by pan-Arab Nasserists and other radicals), was another factor that helped infiltration. Hussein was wont to visit West Bank border villages and wounded Arabs after Israeli raids and to make anti-Israeli statements, implying that Jordan would not long suffer such raids without response. 'By so doing, Hussein loosened the reins [on infiltration though] he had not intended this,' according to one Israel Foreign Ministry Arabist, Moshe Sasson. He noted a radical change in the Jordanians' handling of infiltrators from the firmness of 'Abdullah's days to the weakness of Hussein's early rule.[51]

A number of incidents seemed to confirm the Israeli view that some Arab Legion units or, at least, officers, were also involved. 'Whatever their orders from above, local Legion units are co-operating to a certain extent with . . . infiltrators,' wrote one IDF officer.[52] The Israelis had indications that Legion officers in the Dead Sea area, 'at least on a local level, had a hand in the recent troubles'.[53] But these were the exceptions, at least down to early 1956. 'The Jordanians are continuing routinely with their anti-infiltration measures,' reported IDF intelligence in November 1952.[54]

In early 1953, however, IDF intelligence picked up a variety of signals pointing to increasing co-operation between local Jordanian authorities, including National Guardsmen and policemen ('and possibly junior Legion

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[48] 'Report on Meetings with Ahmad Bey Touqan that Took Place on 10 and 12 February 1952 at Jalame and Tulkarm', Ramati to DMI, etc., ? Feb. 1952, ISA FM 2432/1.

[49] Evans to FO, 11 Mar. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490.

[50] Furlonge to Ross, 8 Oct. 1952, PRO FO 371-9875 E1072/50.

[51] M. Sasson, Israel Legation, Athens, to FM, 21 June 1953, ISA FM 2531/11 aleph.

[52] Ramati to de Ridder, chairman of IJMAC, 18 Nov. 1951, ISA FM 2431/9.

[53] Ramati to Makleff, etc., undated (but from end Sept. 1951), ISA FM 2431/9.

[54] `Activities [on] the Borders: Summaries and Conclusions for the Month of Oct. 1952', IDF Intelligence Dept., 14 Nov. 1952, ISA FM 2428/7.

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personnel'), and infiltrators,[55] and at the IJMAC Israel charged that specific Legion officers had sent in infiltrators ('armed criminals').[56] Apparently, some Jordanian district governors were also supporting infiltration (for either financial or political motives, or both).[57]

There was a general increase in infiltration which Sharett attributed, at least in part, to the reduction of Legion patrols and to the NG's lax attitude. Indeed, its men either 'themselves took part in infiltration or shared in the spoils'. Perhaps Amman—given the weakness of the central government—now simply paid less attention to the situation along the border.[58]

The situation thus remained equivocal: the Legion and (by and large) Jordan's political leaders opposed infiltration and did what they could to stop it;[59] local authorities, police, and National Guardsmen either failed to enforce the central government's policy or, in certain sectors, were in league with the infiltrators.

Occasionally, Amman launched special clampdowns. Thus, on 21 May 1953, following a series of IDF raids, the Jordanian Cabinet decided that, in addition to assisting the border villages materially, strengthening the NG, and increasing the number of Legion posts along the border, it would again press the 'border authorities to combat infiltration . . .'.[60] A large force of policemen were drafted from the East Bank, and stationed in West Bank frontier villages, villages were combed for 'strangers', the police and the Legion instituted more border patrols, and 'guarantees of good behaviour' were elicited from local mukhtars.[61] The clampdown was successful and led to a substantial reduction in infiltration, as both Israeli and British officials noted.[62]

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[55] 'The Infiltration in the Year 1952 (a Summary for the Months Jan.-Nov.)', unsigned (but IDF Intelligence Dept.), undated (but from early 1953), ISA FM 2428/4 aleph; Evans (Tel Aviv) to FO, 30 Jan. 1953, PRO FO 371-104765 ER1073/7.

[56] 'The Israel-Jordan Mixed Armistice Commission, Complaints, Investigations, Votes of Censure (from June 1952 to June 1953)', ISA FM 2430/1.

[57] 'The Infiltration into Israel in 1952 and the Recent Tension (Dec. 1952-Jan. 1953) along the Borders', protocol of meeting on 4 Feb. 1953 of IDF and FM intelligence executives, unsigned and undated, ISA FM 2402/12.

[58] Elitzur, FM, to Israel Embassy, London, 3 Feb. 1953, ISA FM 2592/18; Lt.-Col. H. Gaon, IDF General Staff officer for MACs, to OC General Staff Branch, etc., 3 May 1953, ISA FM 2949/18.

[59] 'Infiltration into Israel in 1952 and the Recent Tension (Dec. 1952-Jan. 1953) along the Borders', ISA FM 2402/12. See also Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 4 June 1953, BGA.

[60] Furlonge to FO, 26 May 1953, PRO FO 371-104782 ER1091/171. See also Furlonge to FO, 30 May 1953, PRO FO 371-104783 ER1091/198.

[61] Glubb to Lt.-Col. R. K. Melville (Arab Legion Liaison Office, London), 15 June 1953, PRO FO 371-104784; Glubb to Melville, 23 June 1953, PRO FO 371-104785; Glubb to Melville, 31 July 1953, PRO FO 371-104780; 'Monthly Situation Report for Jordan for the Month of June 1953', Furlonge, undated (but from early July 1953), PRO FO 371-104887; Furlonge to FO, 13 June 1953, PRO FO 371-104784 ER1091/226; Furlonge to Ross, 9 June 1953, PRO FO 371-104784 ER1091/230.

[62] Capt. A. Har-Even, IDF Intelligence Branch, to Bendor, FM, 30 June 1953, ISA FM 2429/5; Glubb to Melville (London), 23 June 1953, PRO FO 371-104785: 'Incidents have virtually ceased.'

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Throughout, Jordan denied that its local officials were encouraging infiltration. On 11 March 1953 Nashashibi, the chief Jordanian delegate to the IJMAC, pointed to the special judicial powers given to the West Bank district governors to punish infiltrators. Only the day before, six had been sentenced to a year's exile. 'The charge that local Jordanian authorities were involved in infiltration or encouraged it is untrue,' Nashashibi said.[63]

In several well-documented cases—such as the Yehud killings in October 1953 and the Scorpions Pass Massacre of March 1954—Glubb and the Legion (probably driven by a wish to avert IDF retaliation) went to great lengths to identify and apprehend those responsible,[64] and throughout 1954 Israeli intelligence continued to intercept messages from Glubb to his subordinates, ordering them to clamp down on infiltrators.[65] Repeatedly during 1955, Jordan prohibited the *fellahin* from ploughing along the border, whether in Israel, no man's land, or on the Jordanian side of the line. Shepherds, too, were forbidden to approach the line,[66] and in December 1954 the Legion received its first consignment of British-trained police dogs, whose main task was to track infiltrators.

Israeli politicians and officers, such as Lieutenant-Colonel Haim Gaon, the IDF General Staff officer for the MACs, continued to announce in public that 'infiltration is being sponsored, inspired, guided, or at least utilized by the [Arab] Legion'. But the country's intelligence experts clearly thought otherwise.[67]

The IDF raid on Qibya (see Chapter 8), in October 1953, triggered a vigorous effort by the Legion to curb infiltration, with Glubb doubling his battalions in the West Bank and intensifying anti-infiltration ambushing and patrols. The punishments meted out to infiltrators were published prominently, and a variety of regulations were imposed curbing civilian

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[63] 'Special Meeting with the Jordanians', Lt.-Col. H. Gaon to IDF Intelligence Branch, 12 Mar. 1953, ISA FM 2949/18. Y. Elgom, the FM expert on Jordan, agreed with Nashashibi ('Infiltration into Israel in 1952 and the Recent Tension (Dec. 1952-Jan. 1953) along the Borders', ISA FM 2402/12).

[64] Bennike to Makleff, 14 Oct. 1953, ISA FM 2429/5; Glubb to Melville, 26 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111099; Tekoah to Israel missions (Washington, etc.), 19 Mar. 1954, ISA FM 2949/18.

[65] See, e.g., 'Glubb Demands Punishment of Infiltrators', Foreign Ministry Research Dept., 1 Feb. 1954, ISA FM 2453/6, a summary of a complaint by Glubb to the Jordanian defence minister about local officials' laxity in punishing West Bank shepherds and farmers who had crossed the border.

[66] 'Jordanian Limitations on Border Farmers', Foreign Ministry Research Dept., 11 Nov. 1954, ISA FM 2494/3; 'Frontier Complaints Submitted January 1955', Lt.-Col. R. J. Gammon, Amman, 1 Feb. 1955, PRO FO 371-115896.

[67] Eilan to Rafael, 4 Jan. 1954, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph; 'The Infiltration into Israel', a report on infiltration during 1952-3, unsigned (but IDF Intelligence Dept.), undated (but with covering note), IDF Intelligence Dept., to Foreign Minister's secretary, 20 Jan. 1954, ISA FM 2402/12.

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activities along the border. These measures, coupled with Israel's defensive actions, resulted in a substantial, steady decline in general infiltration from Jordan and an equally significant reduction in terrorist infiltrations. According to one source, thefts and robberies along the Jordanian—Israeli border dropped from 1,154 cases in 1952, to 722 in 1953, to 229 in 1954, and 169 in 1955. Similarly, the number of Israelis killed by infiltrators along this border dropped from 57 in 1953, to 34 in 1954, and 11 in 1955.[68]

Israeli and Western officials quickly noted the decreasing infiltration. During the summer of 1954 Dayan told American officials of a 'definite improvement' due to Jordan's 'effective measures'.[69] In July British diplomats in Amman reported that the Jordanian government was doing 'its utmost' to prevent criminal infiltration into Israel,[70] and by August Glubb was claiming that infiltration across Jordan's border had 'been practically brought to a stop'.[71] In September, '1,000' infiltrators or would-be infiltrators were in Jordan's prisons.[72] In October the counsellor at the Israel Embassy in London, Gershon Avner, agreed with British officials that the Jordanians were 'trying to check infiltration'.[73] During the second half of 1954 and 1955, the Arab Legion arrested dozens of infiltrators, including those responsible for several murders in Israel.[74] Unusually, in summer 1954 an article appeared in the Jordanian daily, *Al Dif'a*, by Yussuf Hana, a regular columnist, calling on the authorities to combat infiltration because it only led to IDF reprisals.[75] During the last months of 1955 and 1956, the Jordanian authorities kept close tabs on Egyptian (and Saudi) efforts to recruit and dispatch infiltrators from Jordan, and continued, up to summer 1956, to curb infiltration.

But, again, there is contrary evidence regarding the local echelon of Jordanian officials and officers. In February 1954 a senior Israeli official, Yehoshu`a Palmon, the prime minister's adviser on Arab affairs, insisted that local Legion and NG officers not only allowed economic infiltration

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[68] Tal, 'HaTguvot', 42-3. Tal writes that the number of Israelis killed by infiltrators along the Jordan-Israel border was 11 in 1949, 18 in 1950, 44 in 1951, and 46 in 1952.

[69] 'Memorandum of Conversation (Eban, Dayan, Shiloah, Byroade and Burdett)', 16 July 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5,611.84a/7-1654; British Embassy, Amman, to Levant Dept., FO, 1 June 1954, PRO FO 371-111102 VR 1091/96.

[70] British Embassy, Amman, to Eden, FO, 27 July 1954, PRO FO 371-111073.

[71] Report on meeting between Glubb and British minister of state at FO, 11 Aug. 1954, PRO FO 371-110928 VJ1208/5.

[72] P. Geren (Amman) to State Dept., 10 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5, 684a. 85/9-1054. Qibya, wrote Geren, the embassy counsellor, may have reduced infiltration, but there were now whole clans of West Bankers waiting for the opportunity to take revenge on Israel.

[73] Minute, J. F. Brewis, 7 Oct. 1954, PRO FO 371-11106 VR1091/230.

[74] See, e.g. J. C. B. Richmond, Amman, to FO, 17 Feb. 1955, PRO FO 371-115896 VR 1092/23 and attached Arab Legion report, 'Armed Infiltration—`Ajjur Village, 18 Jan. 1955', 13 Feb. 1955; British Embassy, Amman, to British Embassy, Tel Aviv, 20 Dec. 1955, PRO FO 371-115911.

[75] Y. Landau to G. Rafael, 10 Sept. 1954, ISA FM 2402/12.

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in various sectors but actively supported it—on condition that the infiltrators also carried out acts of 'murder and sabotage . . . to terrorize the Jewish border settlers'. These officers, it was claimed, thus exploited economic infiltration to activate political-terrorist infiltration against Israel.[76] In summer 1954 the Israelis intercepted a letter from a Nablus judge to Jordan's minister of justice, who, apparently, had rebuked the judge for imposing too stiff a sentence on an infiltrator who had murdered an Israeli in Ra`anana on 27 June. Apparently, some senior politicians in Amman were also not unsympathetic towards the infiltrators. (The judge argued back that stiff sentences would deter infiltration which caused IDF reprisals in which West Bankers were killed.)[77]

While 1954-6 witnessed a significant, gradual reduction in infiltration from Jordan into Israel, Jordanian policy from March 1956 until October-November 1956 remains problematic. Hussein's dismissal in March 1956 of Glubb and most of the Britons who had staffed the senior posts in the Arab Legion was both a response to the Nasserist threat to his regime and to the radicalization of the Palestinians in his kingdom (apparent from the Templer riots of December 1955 onwards) and, at the same time, an expression of that radicalization. While Hussein continued to try to avoid war and, hence, border clashes, the rise to prominence in the Legion of young Arab commanders, some of them radicals, could not but send a certain signal to units and officials along the border. The gradual deterioration in Israeli-Jordanian relations was reflected in an increase in terrorist attacks from Jordan. The Legion began recruiting its own Fedayeen and co-operating with Gaza-based Fedayeen squads. Some terrorist attacks were certainly condoned by the Legion and some infiltration may have been organized by Legion officers, though Amman's policy generally remained to curb infiltration.

Egypt

Throughout the early and mid-1950s Israel variously charged that the Egyptian authorities were instigating or encouraging infiltration from the Gaza Strip and Sinai, actively helping the infiltrators, and doing nothing to curb the incursions.[78] The reality was somewhat different and more

[76] 'The Situation on the Israel-Jordan Border and Suggestions for its Improvement', unsigned and undated, but with covering letter, B. Yekutieli to prime minister's secretary and Rafael, FM, 25 Feb. 1954, stating that the memorandum's author was Yehoshua Palmon, ISA PMO 5433/23.

[77] A. R. Moore (Tel Aviv) to P. S. Falla, FO, 18 Oct. 1954, PRO FO 371-11106 VR1091/242.

[78] e.g. Gershon Avner, the counsellor at the Israel Embassy in London in October 1954, told FO officials that the 'infiltrators were organised by, or at any rate had the tacit approval of, the Egyptian authorities' (minute by J. F. Brewis, 7 Oct. 1954, PRO FO 371-11106 VR1091/230; A. R. Moore to Falla, 18 Oct. 1954, PRO FO 371-11106 VR1091/241).

complex, with the IDF's Gaza Raid in February 1955 marking a clear watershed: Before the raid, Egyptian policy had, with few exceptions, consistently opposed infiltration; after it, while continuing to oppose uncontrolled civilian infiltration, the Egyptian authorities themselves initiated terrorist infiltration for political and military reasons.

In their more candid moments, before 1955, Israeli officials acknowledged that Egypt opposed infiltration. In November 1953 Dayan, then OC IDF General Staff Branch, told American officials that

> the problems along the border with Egypt are not the fruit of Egyptian Government plots but a fruit of its neglect, especially in the Gaza Strip area, where Egyptian rule is weak and the refugee problem is going from bad to worse. The Egyptians are busy with their internal problems . . . and do not pay attention to what is happening in the Strip . . . and therefore . . . the infiltration spreads.[79]

Throughout the 1949-56 period Egypt opposed the movement of refugees from the Strip into Israel or through Israel into Jordan. While regarding the Gaza refugees as a major economic, social, and political burden, the Egyptians were not unmindful of their value as a 'lever in international bargaining' and as 'a club over Israel in the UN and before the world generally'. The Egyptians may also have felt that mass illegal refugee emigration from the Strip would reflect poorly upon Egypt and may have feared a 'brain drain' in which the younger, more able, and educated refugees would emigrate, leaving behind only the poor uneducated masses.[80]

However, the main reasons behind Egyptian opposition to infiltration into Israel were probably the natural reluctance of national officials to see *their* borders violated and their writ flouted, and, secondly, the desire not to provoke their powerful neighbour. Throughout 1949-54 Cairo's overriding concern in its relations with Israel was to avoid sparking IDF attacks. Infiltration from the Strip, especially if it resulted in Israeli casualties, eventually triggered Israeli retaliation. Moreover, the infiltration from Gaza in a sense legitimized Israel's raids.

But, as we saw earlier, during 1954 the Egyptian military intelligence office in Gaza, headed by Major (later Colonel) Mustafa Hafez, periodically sent squads into Israel primarily to gather military intelligence.[81] Often, however, these squads stole, sabotaged, and murdered, whether on Hafez's orders or at private initiative. On a number of occasions squads were sent by Hafez on revenge missions following IDF raids (as in April 1954).

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[79] Quoted in Tal, 'HaTguvot', 147-8 n. 87.

[80] B. P. Clark (Media, Pennsylvania) to H. Jenkins (AFSC), 21 Nov. 1950, AFSCA, Foreign Service, Palestine 1950; P. B. Johnson (Beirut) to C. Pickett (Paris), 5 Nov. 1951, AFSCA, Foreign Service, Palestine, 1951.

[81] Capt. A. Har-Even, in the name of DMI, to A. Eilan, FM, 23 Dec. 1954, ISA FM 2436/7 aleph.

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During the winter of 1954-5 the picture grew more complex, as bilateral relations deteriorated. Inevitably, this also affected the frontier. The Anglo-Egyptian agreement on the removal of the British military presence from the Canal Zone, the *Bat-Galim* and Lavon affairs, Egyptian—Western antagonism over the Baghdad Pact, the execution of the two Lavon Affair saboteurs, and the growth of mutual Israeli-Egyptian distrust all contributed to this deterioration. Egyptian raids in summer 1954 and in late February 1955 demonstrated a growing belligerency and adventurousness among Egyptian officials in Gaza, which to some degree probably reflected thinking among members of the RCC in Cairo. The Israeli response—the Gaza Raid of 28 February—was followed by systematic Egyptian-Palestinian front-line and commando unit raids against IDF patrols (March-May 1955). The Israeli retaliatory response to that was followed by a succession of all-out Fedayeen campaigns against Israeli troops, traffic, and settlements (August 1955-April 1956).

But during this same 1954-6 period, Egypt continued to oppose privately organized and launched infiltration from the Strip. During 1955-6, at least, the Egyptians wanted controlled tension, not anarchy.[82] However, the clampdown on run-of-the-mill border infiltration quite naturally grew increasingly ineffective as Palestinian troops were deployed along the line and as Egyptian-Israeli hostility increased. If Egyptian and Israeli troops were trading fire along the border, could Palestinian and Egyptian troops be expected to punish Palestinian raiders?

As with Jordan, the Egyptian authorities maintained from the outset that they were doing all they could to 'prevent acts of sabotage [across the border]. Many have been arrested and serious punishments were handed out.'[83] For a while in 1949-50 joint Egyptian—Israeli military patrols took place along the Gaza frontier aimed at curtailing infiltration. But they were soon abandoned as the Israelis felt that they were ineffective. In practice, as one Israeli official put it,

> despite all their promises, the Egyptians failed to show any signs of co-operation in the battle against the infiltrators and [against] the increase of thefts [by infiltrators]. It is known that the Gaza police has put its hands on much of the property stolen from Israeli territory, and the Egyptians promised to return it, but did not keep their promise.[84]

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[82] S. Khalaf ('Abu Iyyad'), the late PLO leader, wrote in his autobiography of Egypt's arrest of his colleague, Khalil al Wazir ('Abu Jihad'), after Abu Jihad had tried to organize a raid into Israel in 1954 (*LeLo Moledet* (Tel Aviv, 1979), 52).

[83] 'Report on the Meeting of the MAC at Auja 27.12.49, Written by Major Yeruham Cohen', ISA FM 2438/6.

[84] 'A Report on the MAC with Egypt', Lt.-Col. M. Hanegbi, head of Israel delegation to EIMAC, to IDF General Staff officer for the MACs, etc., ? Feb. 1952, ISA FM 2438/6.

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A more generous view was that 'the Egyptians are trying to stop the infiltrators, but [the refugees'] hunger and the open countryside beckon'.[85] A major reason for Egyptian ineffectiveness was that Egypt simply had too few troops and police in the Strip. During most of 1949-54 the Egyptian army had only one regular company there.

Continued infiltration, including occasional sabotage and ambushes, led to IDF retaliatory strikes at the end of 1951 and early 1952. These had the desired effect. After one such operation, 'the Egyptian representatives turned to us and promised that they are ready to co-operate in eradicating the gangs and to fight the infiltrators—and even to return some of the stolen property' if Israel curbed its raiders.[86] During the last months of 1951 the Egyptians acted vigorously against infiltration, which, they said, 'represented . . . a destabilizing factor in the Strip'. They also suspected that infiltrators were being turned and used by Israeli intelligence.

But by early 1952 policy had become one thing, implementation another. 'Egyptian policy was not being implemented,' IDF intelligence reported.[87] Most Israeli officials believed that the Egyptian authorities knew the identity of the 'professional' infiltrators and could have stopped the organized gangs—if not the casual fruit-thieves and trespassing shepherds—had they wished to.[88]

Retaliatory strikes against targets in the Strip—and especially Operation Yegev, the 79th Battalion's raid on 21 October 1951 on the eastern suburbs of Gaza, in which dozens of houses were demolished and tens of Egyptians and Palestinians killed and wounded—led to a tightening of Egyptian border controls and

> orders . . . to arrest every infiltrator. A prize was given to every [border] guard catching a border-crosser. The authorities warned the inhabitants and threatened heavy penalties against infiltrators. [The Egyptians] set up summary courts (among the sentences—ten years' imprisonment).[89]

IDF retaliatory strikes apparently also had the desired effect of persuading some local Arab dignitaries and tribal chiefs to curtail infiltration by members of their communities. One tribal chief—raided on 3 January 1952—threatened that he would personally take revenge on any tribe member caught infiltrating into Israel.[90]

As with Jordan, at the end of 1951 low-level Israeli-Egyptian negotia-

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[85] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 3 Feb. 1950, BGA.

[86] 'Report on the MAC with Egypt', ISA FM 2438/6.

[87] 'The Infiltration into Israel', ISA FM 2402/12.

[88] 'Report on the MAC with Egypt', ISA FM 2438/6.

[89] M. Bar-Kochba, *Merkavot HaPlada* (Tel Aviv, 1989), 105-111.

[90] 'The Activity on the Borders: Summaries and Conclusions for the Month of Jan. 1952', IDF Intelligence Dept., 19 Feb. 1952, ISA FM 2428/7. The raid on the Nabahin, called Operation Misgeret, is described in Bar-Kochba, *Merkavot*, 113-19.

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tions resulted in agreement for regular meetings between local police commanders to co-ordinate operations. A measure of co-operation was inaugurated. But the Israelis soon complained that their Egyptian counterparts rarely showed up for the meetings (at kilometre 95 on the Gaza—Israel frontier). And the Egyptians rarely returned stolen Israeli goods. On 28 February 1952 the Egyptians returned a number of six-inch irrigation pipes, some wooden planks, a watch, and several articles of clothing. A week later, they returned more irrigation pipes and two stolen tractor wheels. Israel, for its part, handed over three infiltrators who had completed their sentences in Israeli prisons.[91]

By mid-1952 infiltration was again on the rise. The Egyptians maintained that they were 'taking all possible preventive measures and harshly punishing the infiltrators'. But it was impossible to bring infiltration to a complete stop 'because of the overcrowding in a small area [i.e. the Gaza Strip]'. Israel proposed that the refugee population in the Strip be moved to Egypt's Western Desert, to Mersa Matruh. The Egyptians countered that this was impossible 'for political reasons'.[92]

The two countries agreed on a joint demarcation of the border—with a trench and barrels—and Israel periodically handed the Egyptian authorities lists of known infiltrators.[93] The Egyptians, according to IDF intelligence, 'made great efforts' to stop the infiltrators, but with only partial success—'in effect, they are powerless [to stop them]'.[94] Nor had there been any improvement in their attitude to stolen Israeli property.[95] At one point, the Egyptians candidly explained that they did not return stolen property because they did not want to appear too co-operative with Israel.[96]

The Egyptian authorities appeared genuinely troubled by the upsurge of terrorist infiltration against Israel in early 1953. Concerned about an emerging Palestinian 'underground' in the Strip, which might turn against themselves, the Egyptians asked for Israeli intelligence assistance. The Egyptians expressed an interest in arresting the heads of the 'Black Hand' Sinai bedouin gang, and promised to furnish Israel with details about the

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[91] 'Report on Meetings of the Israel-Egypt MAC', Capt. G. Neuberger, intelligence officer for Negev District, to IDF General Staff officer for MACs, etc., 6 Mar. 1952, ISA FM 2438/6.

[92] 'Report on a Meeting that Took Place on 22 July 1952 at kilometre 95 on the Gaza Road', Lt.-Col. Basil Herman, Israel delegation to EIMAC, to OC Southern Command, etc., 30 July 1952, ISA FM 2436/6 bet.

[93] Capt. B. Zerubavel, Israel delegation to EIMAC, to OC Southern Command, etc., 26 Sept. 1952, ISA FM 2438/6.

[94] 'The Infiltration in 1952 (a Summary for the Months January-November)', IDF Intelligence Dept., undated, ISA FM 2428/4 aleph.

[95] 'Infiltration—Yearly Report for 1952', Section for Combating Infiltration, Israel Police, to IDF General Staff Branch/Operations, 3 Mar. 1953, ISA FM 2402/12; Neuberger to Col. Gohar, 21 Feb. 1954, ISA FM 2439/1.

[96] Neuberger to IDF General Staff officer for MACs, 17 Sept. 1953, ISA FM 2438/6.

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guides who led groups from the Strip to the Hebron Hills.[97] They set up a tribunal to try infiltrators and increased their supervision in the Strip over animal slaughter in an attempt to identify stolen animals. The Israeli and Egyptian delegates to the Egypt—Israel Mixed Armistice Commission (EIMAC) exchanged information about suspects.[98]

Egyptian efforts to curb infiltration seem to have intensified in the second half of 1953, as Israeli reprisals became more painful. In September 1953 one Egyptian official told his Israeli counterparts that he did 'not care . . . whether [Israel] imprisoned captured infiltrators or executed them'.[99] At the end of 1953 the Strip's administrative governor reported to Cairo that 'close to fifty persons had been arrested [by the Egyptians] and thus the infiltration had been almost eradicated'. Earlier, in August 1953, following the IDF raid on the Bureij refugee camp, the head of Egyptian military intelligence at El Arish reported that orders had been issued 'to intensify guard and patrols in order to prevent infiltration and to capture infiltrators . . .'.

A similar picture obtains for 1954. Egyptian efforts that spring to curb independent infiltration into Israel appear not to have been particularly energetic.[100] But in June, Mustafa Hafez complained to the military commander of the Strip about a series of minings in Israel by Gaza-based infiltrators, warning that they could lead to Israeli reprisals. Egyptian forces must 'take steps to assure that such operations would not recur', he insisted.[101] In July, following an IDF raid, Hafez wrote an extensive memorandum to OC Egyptian Military Intelligence opposing the recruitment of local Palestinians to the emergent National Guard (*al Hares al Watani*) in the Strip: it was 'a bad idea'. The mines that had triggered the Israeli raid had been planted by Palestinians, he wrote, adding:

A. The Palestinian soldiers and the refugees carry out aggressive operations in the Jewish area for revenge, believing that such operations will help solve the refugee problem.

B. The main objective of the [Egyptian] military presence along the armistice line is to prevent infiltration, but the Palestinian troops encourage the movement of infiltrators and carry out attacks along the line, and this will lead to an increase in tension.

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[97] Harman, to IDF General Staff officer for MACs, 9 Apr. 1953, ISA FM 2438/6.

[98] Neuberger to IDF General Staff officer for MACs, 25 June 1953, ISA FM 2438/6.

[99] Neuberger to IDF General Staff officer for the MACs, 17 Sept. 1953, ISA FM 2438/6.

[100] Furlonge to FO, 5 Apr. 1954, PRO FO 371-111094 VR1078/2: Glubb said that 'Egyptian officers who recently visited Jordan . . . admitted that the Egyptian Government made no attempt to stop infiltration into Israel and were surprised that Jordan did'.

[101] Ya`ari, *Mitzrayim*, 14. Ya`ari based his thirty-one-page, important pioneering study on Egyptian military and civilian archives captured in Gaza during the Israeli invasions of 1956 and 1967, and on Jordanian intelligence material captured in Nablus in 1967.

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C. The Jews will exploit Palestinian soldiers [for intelligence purposes] . . .

D. There are persons with destructive intentions who are encouraging Palestinian soldiers to carry out acts of sabotage against the Jews in the occupied territory [i.e. Israel].[102]

The IDF raids and these memoranda were followed, in September, by a clampdown on the local Palestinian population as the Egyptians sought to halt the provocations that led to IDF reprisals. The local National Guard was not disbanded, but some 200 Palestinians were arrested. During 1953-4 the Egyptian army had set up a string of outposts on the Gaza—Israel border. According to the chief Egyptian delegate to the MAC, the front-line troops had orders to shoot, after dusk, 'without warning', at anything that moved near their positions.[103] A few weeks later, Egypt raised the maximum penalty for sabotage-oriented infiltration from five to ten years imprisonment, and to six to eight months for agricultural infiltration. The Egyptian authorities also arrested a group of infiltrators who had sabotaged Israel's north-west Negev water pipeline. [104]

Egyptian efforts to curb civilian infiltration during the last months of 1954 and January 1955 were largely successful,[105] At the end of January a meeting of senior Egyptian commanders in the Strip decided 'to prohibit movement out of the villages east of the Gaza—Rafah road . . . to [issue orders to] open fire on any infiltrator discovered . . . [and] to issue severe guidelines against crossing the armistice line.' Village mukhtars were ordered to inform the authorities about anyone missing from their villages, and mukhtars whose villagers or tribesmen were frequent infiltrators were to be dismissed. A new detention camp was to be opened for infiltration suspects; a special platoon, seconded to Hafez, was assigned to fight infiltration; and there was to be summary sentencing of convicted infiltrators and publication of their sentences. Food was to be withheld from refugees who did not come in person to collect it.[106]

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[102] Ya`ari, *Mitzrayim*, 13-14. Ya`ari earlier (pp. 12-13) explained that at the end of 1953 the Egyptians had set up a 250-strong Palestinian 'Civil Guard' (*al Hares al Ahali*) in the Strip, to help the police keep an eye on the refugee camps. In spring 1954 the Egyptians set up the National Guard (*al Hares al Watani*) in the Strip to help the army guard the Strip's frontiers against Israeli raiders. Ya'ari notes the chronological 'parallel' between the raising and integration of the NG in the Egyptian defences along the Strip's borders and the rise in infiltration from the Strip into Israel.

[103] Maj. A. Rabkin to DMI, 16 Sept. 1954, ISA FM 2438/6.

[104] Rabkin to DMI, 28 Nov. 1954, ISA FM 2436/7 aleph. The Israeli officer reported the Egyptian delegate to the MAC, Col. Naguib, as describing the Strip as a 'military, economic and social burden' for Egypt; he had said, too, that it could not be defended, that he did not like the Palestinians, and that Israeli readiness to take back the Gaza Strip refugees would 'pave the way for Israeli—Egyptian peace'.

[105] 'The Gaza Incident—Summary and Situation Assessment', IDF Intelligence Branch, 22 Mar. 1955, ISA FM 2454/5.

[106] Ya`ari, *Mitzrayim*, 16.

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In February 1955 Egypt, according to IDF intelligence, 'fear[ed] that Israel would exploit the [on-going] intra-Arab crisis to take care of outstanding problems'. Fear that Israel was about to embark on an aggressive policy was reinforced by the return of the 'Activist' Ben-Gurion to the Israeli Cabinet as defence minister, according to IDF Intelligence Branch. The Egyptians sent in a large number of intelligence-gathering squads. One of these squads killed an Israeli cyclist near Rehovot ('possibly on their own initiative')—triggerng the Gaza Raid (28 February), the Egyptian mining attacks that followed, and a general escalation of Israeli—Egyptian border clashes, ending in the October—November 1956 Sinai—Suez War. [107]

March 1955 witnessed a radical change in Egyptian policy towards Israel. Immediately after the Gaza Raid, Egyptian officials—who had hitherto referred to infiltrators as *mitsalilun*, a negative term connoting thieves—began to refer to infiltrators as *Fedayeen* (men of sacrifice), a positive term. A similar change occurred in the Egyptian media, which hailed the Fedayeen, and Egyptian documents began to refer with pride to the exploits of the border-crossers and with delight at the distress they were causing Israeli border communities.[108]

None the less, the Egyptian authorities continued to distinguish between state-run infiltrators and private initiatives. During the eighteen months between the Gaza Raid and the Sinai—Suez War, the Egyptian authorities appear to have clamped down on 'private' Palestinian infiltration, keeping it to a minimum, while periodically sending official Fedayeen and commandos to wreak havoc along the border. UN observers noted a major decline in 'private' infiltration along the Gaza border between 28 February and mid-May 1955 (at a time when Egyptian army squads regularly attacked Israeli border patrols). The decrease in 'private' infiltration possibly owed something to the new well-publicized official marauding: with the state striking at Israel, local 'private' motivation for attack declined. 'Private' infiltration decreased further between mid-May—when IDF troops attacked an Egyptian army position across the border from Kibbutz Kissufim—and 22 August, when Israeli troops attacked the Egyptians' position opposite Kibbutz Mefalsim. It was after this raid that Egypt launched the first 'official' Fedayeen campaign.[109]

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[107] 'The Gaza Incident—Summary and Situation Assessment', ISA FM 2454/5.

[108] Ya`ari, *Mitzrayim*, 19. The term 'Fedayeen' seems at this time to have been applied both to the 'official' infiltrators, recruited and dispatched by Hafez, and the 'unofficial' Palestinian marauders who hit Israeli targets independently.

[109] Chef de Bataillon F. X. Giacomaggi, chairman EIMAC, to chief of staff UNTSO, 19 Sept. 1955, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-96, EIMAC, Egypt-Israel Talks June 1955.

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It appears that the Egyptian authorities continued to try to curb infiltration even after September 1955, while periodically activating their own intelligence squads and Fedayeen. But there can be little doubt that, in the increasingly warlike atmosphere, Egyptian and Palestinian troops and officers on the Gaza frontier—whatever their orders—did little to stop, capture, or punish private infiltrators.

Throughout there was, as with Jordan, a discrepancy between central policy and local practice, between decision and implementation. Implementation fell largely upon the Gaza Strip police, local authorities, and mukhtars—who, for the most part, were Palestinians and sympathetic towards the infiltrators.[110] Or, as IDF intelligence put it: 'The Egyptian army generally makes efforts to prevent infiltration, which is a source of instability in the Strip . . . but . . . the authorities' line is not carried out.'[111]

Two qualifications are necessary. Firstly, as with Syria and the Israeli—Syrian DMZs, so the Egyptians in the early and mid-1950s made an exception in the Al Auja DMZ, encouraging and directing successive waves of bedouin infiltration and migration within the zone in order to challenge Israeli claims and control.[112] Secondly, throughout the period Egyptian intelligence dispatched information-gathering squads into the central and northern Negev. Occasionally, as in 1954 and early 1955, these squads sabotaged Israeli targets and killed or wounded Israelis.[113]

Lebanon

From the first, the Lebanese authorities opposed infiltration across their border into Israel and made efforts to halt it. Israel's early success in persuading the Lebanese to co-operate was partly due to raids into Lebanon by IDF Minorities Unit squads of Druse, bedouin, and Circassian soldiers which brought home to Beirut the potential for chaos inherent in continued mass infiltration. By mid-1949 Lebanon began setting up an apparatus to supervise the border efficiently and transferred many of the refugees northwards, to camps near Beirut, Tyre, and Sidon.[114]

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[110] 'Infiltration', by Col. T. M. Hinkle, chairman EIMAC, undated but from second half of 1953, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-97, EIMAC, Current 1953.

[111] 'The Infiltration into Israel', 20 January 1954, ISA FM 2402/12.

[112] Ibid.; 'The Beduins in the Demilitarized Zone', unsigned and undated report (probably from late 1953), ISA FM 2436/7 bet.

[113] Maj. Rosenius, UN observer, to chairman EIMAC, 4 Dec. 1954, and covering note, Rabkin to defence minister's bureau, 10 Dec. 1954, ISA FM 2402/12; Har-Even, in the name of DMI, to Eilan, FM, 23 Dec. 1954, ISA FM 2436/7 aleph.

[114] 'The Situation on the Israeli-Lebanese Border at the Time of and after the Signing of the [Armistice] Agreement', undated report covering the period 20 Feb.-7 July 1949 by Maj. Schnurman and Maj. S. Silberman; 'The Israel-Lebanon MAC', FM circular to Israel's missions abroad, 26 July 1949, both in ISA FM 2432/7.

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By late 1950 the massive wave of resettlement-oriented infiltration into the Galilee had ended: Israeli forces more or less effectively patrolled the borders; a census of Israeli Arabs had been taken and ID cards distributed; and the Military Government and the General Security Service (GSS or Shin Bet) kept relatively efficient watch on comings and goings in the Galilee villages. Infiltrators were normally identified and either imprisoned or sent back over the border.

Summarizing the October 1951-September 1952 period, the chairman of the Israel-Lebanon MAC spoke of the 'satisfactory' results of the commission's work and of 'the spirit of co-operation' which had characterized it. Infiltrations had been promptly dealt with by both countries' police, and captured infiltrators had been swiftly processed and sent back.[115] By 1952 infiltration from Lebanon to Israel was 'almost nonexistent', largely because of efficient border control by the Lebanese gendarmerie. The few infiltrators who persisted were mostly professional smugglers or refugees bent on visiting relatives, and the Lebanese punished those they caught.[116] On the Israeli side, the border was patrolled mainly by police units, with very little IDF input.[117]

Increased terrorist infiltration in 1953 along the northern border (which included a grenade and light-weapons attack in the Israeli settlement of Rosh Pina) resulted in periodic tightening of Lebanese border controls—including arrests, house-to-house searches, curfews, and increased patrols. Several infiltrators were killed in clashes with Lebanese gendarmes, and the Lebanese handed Israel lists of known infiltrators/smugglers.[118]

There were further increases in terrorist infiltration in the first half of 1954. The Israelis threatened to act, complaining that the Lebanese were not doing enough. A Lebanese army plan to transfer those refugees still living in the south to the Tripoli area, in the north, was balked at by Beirut, and Israel was asked to transfer inland the 'Arab al 'Aramshe, a semi-settled bedouin tribe on the Israeli side of border whom the Lebanese suspected of smuggling. [119]

At least one terrorist gang was active along the Lebanese border in the first half of 1954, and Lebanon apparently did nothing about it, even when

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[115] 'Report on the Activity of the Israel-Lebanese MAC (Period from 1 Oct. 1951 to 15 Sept. 1952)', Lt.-Col. E. Allegrini, 16 Sept. 1952, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-43.

[116] 'Infiltration—Annual Survey 1.1.52-31.12.52', Israel Police/Section for Combating Infiltration, undated but with covering note, A. (or E.) Katznelenbogen, to IDF General Staff Operations, 3 Mar. 1953, ISA FM 2402/12.

[117] 'The Infiltration in 1952 (Summary for the Months Jan.-Nov.)', ISA FM 2428/4 aleph.

[118] Israel Delegation to Israel—Syria/Lebanon MAC to IDF General Staff officer for MACs, ? June 1953, ISA FM 2433/2; Capt. S. Reichman to IDF General Staff officer for MACs, 11 Nov. 1953, ISA FM 2433/3.

[119] Reichman to General Staff officer for MACs, 7 Apr. 1954; Reichman to IDF General Staff officer for MACs, 19 May 1954, both in ISA FM 2433/3.

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Israel handed over the gang members' names. Israel also complained that local Lebanese authorities did not always co-operate—as when they refused to allow Israeli tracker dogs to cross the frontier in pursuit of infiltrators after a specific attack.[120] The Lebanese parliament discussed a bill to transfer Palestinian refugee families from the border area to northern Lebanon, but it was not passed.[121] There was resistance among Muslim Lebanese to anti-Palestinian measures and the dominant Christian Lebanese took care not to antagonize the Muslims.

The summer of 1955 witnessed the start of operations along the Lebanese—Israeli border by Egyptian-organized Fedayeen squads. These squads mined Israeli patrol roads and ambushed vehicles, the most serious attack occurring on 22 September, when a bus was ambushed near Meiron. The Lebanese stepped up their border patrols, imposed curfews on border villages, and issued free-fire orders to units encountering infiltrators. In September, the Lebanese authorities declared the ten-kilometre-deep border area a closed security zone, forbidding all non-residents from entering. Some Palestinian refugees were apparently expelled northwards. The Lebanese clearly wished to avert the type of massive IDF reprisals that had taken place in the West Bank and Gaza.[122]

In general, during 1954-6, as previously, the Lebanese authorities maintained fairly effective control of their southern border and prevented massive terrorist infiltration, by 'unofficial' Lebanese—Palestinian squads or Egyptian-run Fedayeen. But, unwilling to rupture the country's Muslim—Christian equilibrium by appearing too enthusiastic to help Israel combat infiltration, Beirut took pains to keep a low profile. Anti-infiltration measures could be—and were—presented to the Lebanese public as 'anti-criminal' and 'anti-smuggling' efforts. In any event, Palestinian refugees were not particularly popular among the Lebanese—certainly not among the Christians, and not even among the Sunni middle class, and the poor Shiite *fellahin* of the south may also have resented them. Occasionally, Lebanese gendarmes skirmished with infiltrators setting out for or returning from Israel. But some local officials or officers helped those heading for Israel—as, allegedly, occurred in the demolition of three houses in `Arab al `Aramshe on the night of 15 June 1956.[123]

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[120] Reichman to IDF General Staff officer for MACs, 26 July 1954, ISA FM 2433/3; 'Summary Record of the 169th [Israeli-Lebanese MAC] Meeting (Emergency) Held at Naqura on 6 August 1954', Col. E. Communal, chairman, Capt. Reichman, and Lt.-Col. Houssami, undated, ISA FM 2432/8.

[121] Tekoah to foreign minister's bureau, 13 Aug. 1954, ISA FM 2432/8.

[122] British Embassy, Beirut, to Levant Department, FO, 28 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-115848/VR1072/280; 'Memorandum of Conversation' (H. Sa`b, Lebanese chargé d'affaires, R. Hare, acting assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, and F. Boardman), 4 Oct. 1955 (Washington), NA RG 59, 684a.86/10-455 CS/S, Box 2692.

[123] 'Report on Activities—June 1956', Israel Delegation to Israel-Syria/Lebanon MAC, 28 June 1956, ISA FM 2434/8.

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By and large, however, the Lebanese authorities managed to curb infiltration, and the Lebanese border was the only one during 1949-56 that witnessed no large-scale Israeli retaliatory raids.

Syria

Unlike Jordan and Egypt, Syria from the first exercised strict control of its border with Israel,[124] and cases of uncontrolled infiltration from Syria were very rare throughout the 1949-56 period. But the Syrian military allowed a certain amount of infiltration for grazing or the cultivation of fields, especially in the DMZs. Indeed, in the course of the struggle over the DMZs, the Syrian military employed 'infiltrators' to further their political and military ends. In March 1951 the Syrian chief of staff, General Zayim Anwar Banud, ordered the commander of the 3rd Brigade, Jamil Barhani, to move 250 Palestinian refugees from Quneitra in Syria to the Hula area, in the DMZ:

> These refugees, to be selected from among the Hula area land-owners, will wear civilian clothes [and] will be armed with personal weapons and machine-guns. They will be placed under Major Jedid's command and will open fire on Jewish workers in the Hula area in order to assist the 8th Infantry Battalion on 24 March.[125]

So-called 'infiltrators', who were often Syrian soldiers in civilian garb, were also used to gather intelligence.[126]

According to one Israeli intelligence report, during May 1951-April 1952 there were over 500 cross-border infiltrations for grazing, ploughing, and reaping along the Israel—Syria border. But the same report, highlighting the Syrians' tight border controls, registered only fourteen infiltrations for theft along the Syrian border, compared with many hundreds from Jordan and Egypt. Similarly, incidents of infiltrators opening fire on Israelis or sabotaging Israeli telephone lines along the Israel—Syrian border during 1951-2 were infinitely fewer than along those other borders.[127]

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[124] Shalev, *Shituf-Pe`ula*, 89. Shalev argues that the absence of infiltration along the Syrian border was due both to tight Syrian supervision and to the absence of large concentrations of Palestinian refugees nearby. To illustrate Syrian policy, Shalev (p. 199) cites the unusual infiltration by a gang of three who penetrated Kibbutz Kfar HaNassi with the aim of stealing, were discovered, and wounded a settlement guard before retreating to Syria. In a subsequent meeting of IDF and Syrian officers, on 24 Apr. 1952, the Syrian representative, Ghassan Jedid, declared that such infiltration would cease: 'It is in the Syrian interest to stop it, and it shall be done.'

[125] A copy of Banud's order—in ISA FM 2433/5—reached IDF Intelligence Dept., Northern Command, on 1 Apr. 1951.

[126] 'The Security Situation on the Syrian Border', an unsigned and undated report (almost certainly by the Kibbutz Artzi Security Dept. from early 1952), HHA 18.8 (15); 'Bulletin No. 10', Kibbutz Artzi Security Dept., 14 Mar. 1952, HHA 18.11 (4).

[127] 'Arab Infiltration into Israel', ed. Z. Ne'eman, Israel Foreign Ministry Research Dept., 10 July 1952, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph.

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Syria's anti-infiltration policy ensured that the IDF and the Israeli police were relatively inactive along this border for most of the 1949-56 period.[128] One reason the Syrians doggedly curbed infiltration was their fear that infiltrators would be turned and used by Israel for intelligence-gathering,[129] but the main reason was a desire to avoid IDF reprisals and an uncontrolled slide to war.

But the situation became more complex between April 1955 and December 1956. For, while Damascus appears initially to have rebuffed Egyptian efforts to launch Fedayeen squads from Syrian territory, it was not always successful. Egyptian agents may have received active or tacit support from lower-ranking Syrian officers and officials. During the second half of 1955 and the last months of 1956 there were a number of Fedayeen attacks along the Syrian—Israeli border. Yet, even in these periods, the Syrians continued to maintain their vigilance, preventing all 'private' infiltration, economic or terrorist, as in previous years.

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[128] 'The Infiltration in 1952 (Summary for the Months Jan—Nov.)', ISA FM 2428/4 aleph.

[129] 'The Infiltration into Israel in 1952 and the Recent Tension (Dec. 1952-Jan. 1953) along the Borders', ISA FM 2402/12.

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4
The Costs of Infiltration

Israeli Casualties

Arab infiltration into Israel produced 'the same effects as irregular [i.e. guerrilla] warfare', stated an Israeli report in 1953. 'It disturbs the peace; engenders an atmosphere of war; harms the economy of the country, both directly and by necessitating extensive security measures.'[1] It had a particularly deleterious effect on the country's border areas, placing 'a very serious strain on Israel agricultural [frontier] settlements'.[2]

As we have seen, the infiltrators of 1948 and early 1949 were almost uniformly unarmed and bent only on resettlement or retrieving abandoned possessions and crops, although occasionally they caused casualties and did lateral damage. Increasingly, and mainly in response to the IDF's free-fire policy (see Chapter 5), the infiltrators arrived armed, and intent on stealing from Jewish settlements. Infiltration to retrieve abandoned possessions and crops gave way, in 1949-50, to infiltration for stealing. Jewish material losses from infiltration peaked in the years 1951-3, slowly falling off (along with the number of infiltrations) during 1954-6, the primary victims being the border settlements.

But economic damage, while occasionally painful, was minor compared with the loss of life and limb caused by the marauding infiltrators to a population which, numbering only about 1.3 million in 1951 and having lost 6,000 dead in the 1948 war, was infinitely sensitive to Jewish casualties.

As we have seen, infiltrators had already accounted for a handful of Israeli dead during 1948. In 1949 infiltrators killed another ten to twenty Jewish civilians.[3] The Israeli death toll rose. According to Israel Defence

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[1] 'Arab Marauding in Israel', unsigned (but probably by Foreign Ministry Research Dept.), 12 May 1953, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph.

[2] 'Annual Review of Israel for 1952', Evans (Tel Aviv), Feb. 1953, and Evans to Eden, 13 Feb. 1953, PRO FO 371-104733 ER1011/1.

[3] J. Wallach and M. Lissak (eds.) (*Atlas Carta Medinat Yisrael, Shanim Rishonot, 1948-1960* (Jerusalem, 1978), 113) say '11' Israeli civilians were killed or wounded along the border with Jordan that year. Shalev (*Shituf-Pe`ula*, 90) writes of '22' Israelis killed along the borders during 1949, though it is unclear whether by Arab soldiers, infiltrators, or both. Seven of the Israelis were killed (and five were wounded) in an ambush in the 'Arava by infiltrating bedouin in April that year (see 'Infiltration and the Locals', Negev District HQ/Intelligence, 29 Apr. 1949, IDFA $\frac{128/51}{41}$).

Ministry statistics, 19 Israeli *civilians* were killed (and 31 wounded) by infiltrators in 1950, 48 were killed (and 49 wounded) in 1951, 42 were killed (and 56 wounded) in 1952, 44 were killed (and 66 wounded) in 1953, 33 were killed (and 77 wounded) in 1954, 24 were killed (and 69 wounded) in 1955, and 54 were killed (and 129 wounded) in 1956. According to these statistics, 70 Israeli *soldiers* died in action in 1951 (presumably on both sides of the border, killed mainly by Arab soldiers but some by infiltrators), 24 in 1952, 27 in 1953, 24 in 1954, 50 in 1955, and 63 in 1956 (excluding the Sinai—Suez Campaign).[4]

[4] Teveth, *Dayan*, 430-2. Teveth obtained these figures from the Defence Ministry's Rehabilitation Division, Dept. for Commemoration of the Fallen. Shalev (*Shituf-Pe`ula*, 90) offers a different set of statistics, based on IDF History Branch documentation. According to Shalev, 22 Israelis died, apparently at the hands of infiltrators, in 1949, 31 in 1950, 23 in 1951, 19 in 1952, 52 in 1953, 18 in 1954, 27 in 1955, and 46 in 1956. (According to these statistics, 3 IDF soldiers died in 1951 in Arab territory in retaliatory strikes, 31 in 1952, 4 in 1953, 49 in 1954, 63 in 1955, and 126 in 1956.) The statistics cited by Shalev apply to IDF fiscal years, 1 Apr.-31 Mar. Shalev's figures seem on the low side compared to statistics in the original documentation from the early 1950s. (Shalev himself, in Oct. 1953 (when serving as the IDF General Staff officer for the MACs), wrote that between May 1950 and 30 Aug. 1953 '421' Israelis were killed or wounded by infiltrators from Jordan. He added that 49 of these Israelis were killed and 79 wounded between 1 Jan. and 15 Oct. 1953 (see Shalev to chairman, IJMAC, 19 Oct. 1953, ISA FM 2429/5).) In July 1952 the Israel Foreign Ministry's Research Dept. wrote that '62' Israelis had been killed by enemy fire (infiltrators and Arab soldiers) and another 110 injured and 29 abducted between May 1951 and May 1952 ('Arab Infiltration into Israel', ed. Z. Ne'eman, Foreign Ministry Research Dept., 10 July 1952, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph). Among other problems, Shalev's figures do not include Israeli troops or civilians killed by fire from across the Jordanian or Egyptian borders. Some of the discrepancies are due to the differentiation or non-differentiation between Israeli civilians killed by infiltrators and by Arab soldiers; and the differentiation or non-differentiation between Israeli civilians and soldiers (killed either by Arab infiltrators or soldiers). According to the Israel Police Special Branch, only 33 of the 66 Israelis killed in 1953 and 27 of the 55 slain in 1954 were killed by civilian infiltrators, the rest being killed by regular Arab soldiers or National Guardsmen in border clashes or sniping incidents along the demarcation line ('The Infiltration—Report on the Problems of Infiltration into Israel—1954', CZA S92-11). While different, the Teveth and Shalev (*Shituf-Pe`ula*) statistics are roughly comparable—putting Israeli dead at the hands of infiltrators between 1949 and 1956 at 20-40 each year. IDF, Israel police, and FM documentation roughly corroborates these statistics. In early 1953 Lt.-Col. A. Tamir of the General Staff Branch said that Israeli losses along the Israeli-Jordanian frontier, civilian and military, inside Israel and in retaliatory strikes across the line, for the whole of 1952 totalled 50 dead, 51 wounded, and 19 taken prisoner. Total Israeli losses in 1952 along the Israeli—Egyptian border were 7 dead, 21 wounded, and 3 captured. Along the Israeli—Lebanese frontier, Israeli losses in 1952 were 1 dead and 1 captured. And along the Israeli—Syrian border, total losses in 1952 were 1 dead, 2 wounded, and 12 taken prisoner. The vast majority of these losses were incurred at the hands of infiltrators rather than Arab soldiers ('The Infiltration into Israel in 1952 and the Recent Tension (Dec. 1952-Jan. 1953) along the Borders', protocol of meeting on 4 Feb. 1953 of IDF and FM intelligence executives, unsigned and undated, ISA FM 2402/12). Israel police statistics of Israeli losses at enemy hands in 1952 relate only to civilians and police personnel. According to these figures, 33 Israelis (civilians and policemen) were killed by Arabs in 1952—4 by Arab soldiers and the rest by infiltrators—and 42 were wounded. The police breakdown shows that 29 of the dead were Jews, 4 were Israeli Arabs; 30 were men and 3 were women. The majority of the dead—19—were 'security personnel'; 16 civilian guards in *moshavim* and Jerusalem, 1 *kibbutz* area commander (Sdeh Boqer), 1 police officer, and 1 (Druse) border policeman.

(Footnote continued on next page)

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Many of the Israeli casualties were sustained in firefights between infiltrators and IDF patrols, policemen, or settlement guards. Occasionally, infiltrators bent primarily on harvesting or theft encountered a lone Jew and indulged in a little 'revenge'. A small proportion of Jewish casualties was caused by infiltrators who set out with the intent to kill or injure Jews. Most of the Israeli casualties seem to have resulted from unpremeditated encounters.[5] To these casualties must be added, perhaps, as many as several dozen Israelis accidentally killed and wounded by other Israelis in skirmishes in which they were mistaken for infiltrators. Thus, on the night of 1/2 July 1951, police shot dead three Israeli watchmen and

(Footnote continued from previous page)

The rest of the dead were 2 housewives, 1 shepherdess, 3 escaped mental patients shot at the border by Arab Legionnaires, and 8 other civilians. Twenty-eight (of the 33) dead were killed along the Jordanian border, 4 on the Egyptian border, and 1 on the Lebanese border. According to the Israel police, 'most of the dead were killed when they disturbed the killers [i.e. infiltrators] during a theft. . . . There were also a handful of cases of murder for murder's sake . . . with the purpose of revenge or intimidation' ('Infiltration—Annual Survey, 1.1.52-31.12.52', Israel Police Special Branch/Section for Combating Infiltration, undated but with covering note, A. (or E.) Katznelenbogen to IDF General Staff/Operations, 3 Mar. 1953, ISA FM 2402/12). In May 1953 the acting DMI, Lt.-Col. Harkabi, informed the CGS's bureau that 49 Israelis had died at the hands of infiltrators in the period 1 May-31 Dec. 1951, and 88 had been wounded; 60 were killed (and 77 wounded) in 1952; and 14 were killed (and 45 wounded) in the first third of 1953 (see Harkabi to CGS's bureau, 12 May 1953, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph). Harkabi's—and others'—statistics about Israeli casualties at the time raised eyebrows among various Israeli officials. Gideon Rafael, a senior FM official, commented acidly in a letter to Sharett that in Mar. 1953 Israel informed the UN that '69' Israelis had died at the hands of infiltrators in 1952; in July 1953 Israel informed the UN that the Israeli dead during this period had numbered '59': 'If so, 10 persons had been resurrected' (Rafael to foreign minister, 31 Dec. 1953, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph). For the confusion about Israeli casualties from infiltration, see also A. Harman (Israel consulate general, New York, to US Dept., Israel Foreign Ministry, 1 Apr. 1954, ISA FM 2949/3).

Statistics for 1948-50 about infiltrations, deaths, and injuries of Israelis in clashes with infiltrators, and damage by infiltrators are unreliable or non-existent. IDF intelligence and the Israel police began keeping orderly, if not always accurate, statistics on the infiltration problem from the end of 1950. Years later, in a move to justify Israeli policies, propagandists inflated the number of Israelis killed by infiltrators in 1949-56. A blatant example is contained in M. Gilbert, *The Arab—Israeli Conflict: Its History in Maps* (new edn., London, 1976), 60, where the author writes that 'between 1951 and 1955 967 Israelis were killed by Arab terrorists operating inside Israel's 1949 borders'. In his appended breakdown, Gilbert states that 111 Israelis were killed in Fedayeen attacks emanating from Jordan and 26 in such attacks emanating from Egypt in 1951; in 1952, the corresponding figures were 114 and 48; in 1953, 124 and 38; in 1954, 117 and 50; and in 1955, 37 and 241. Another 55 Israelis were killed in attacks emanating from Syria and 6 in attacks emanating from Lebanon during 1951-5, according to Gilbert. The figures are pure nonsense, 3-5 times higher than the figures given in contemporary Israeli reports. Gilbert's figures appear to be based on Ben-Gurion's statement to the Knesset on 2 Jan. 1956 (reproduced in D. Ben-Gurion, *Medinat Yisrael HeMehudeshet* (The Restored State of Israel) (Tel Aviv, 1969), ii. 482). But Ben-Gurion had spoken and written about Israeli *casualties (nifga`im)*, meaning *dead and wounded*, not fatalities.

[5] See, e.g., 'The Following is the Account of the Events Referred to in HJK's Complaint dated Dec. 7th, 1949, and Israel's Complaint Dated Dec. 11th, 1949', ISA FM 2431/6.

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wounded a fourth in a shoot-out near Ben Shemen.[6] A few months later, in January 1952, watchmen at Moshav Qatra, in the south, shot dead two other security men after mistaking them for infiltrators.[7] A handful of Israelis were also killed by anti-infiltrator mines and booby-traps.

Direct Economic Damage

There are fairly full and comprehensive figures for direct Israeli material losses—through theft or sabotage by infiltrators—for the years 1951—early 1956. By 1951 procedures for compensation were in place: settlers complained about the theft of a sheep or an irrigation pipe and, within a few months, were compensated by the state. The letters of complaint give an idea of the type and extent of losses due to infiltration. Moshav Beit `Arif, east of Tel Aviv, summarized its losses due to infiltration during June-November 1950 thus: 'we lost the autumn agricultural season . . . poor corn [and] potato crops . . . 3 cows worth I£600, one horse worth I£100, 2 goats worth 1£50 . . . laundry worth I£10, various [irrigation] pipes worth I£1,610.' All told, the moshav demanded 1£8,500 in compensation.[8]

But the problem was not limited to stolen possessions or lost produce. On 17 April 1955 infiltrators blew up a two-family house in Moshav Zecharya, at the western edge of the Jerusalem Corridor. Among the wounded were both families' bread-winners. The local regional council's social worker asked the government to pay a lump sum, to tide the families over until the bread-winners were restored to health; a further 'I£808.08' to replace destroyed and damaged possessions ('6 beds . . . worth 1£154 . . . a large (plain) wooden table I£15 . . . plates of various sizes . . . 1£40 . . . four pairs of socks I£3.5 . . . 10 kilograms of rice . . . I£15' and so on); and seventeen days of hospitalization costs.[9] Sometimes the costs were far greater. When Daniel (David) 'Asus, of Moshav T'lamim, in the south, was murdered by infiltrators on 17 July 1953, he left a widow and four children, aged 3-15. To put the family back on its feet, the local authorities asked the Jewish Agency to provide goats, a chicken hatchery, chickens, a mule, furniture, and other items—for a total of I£2,360.[10]

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[6] A. Ikar to R. Weitz, 5 July 1951, and Ikar to Insurance Section, Jewish Agency Settlement Dept. 19 July 1951, both in CZA S-15/9786.

[7] A. Gottlein (Qatra) to Y. Pinhasi, 8 Feb. 1952, CZA S-92/17.

[8] Moshav Beit `Arif to Ikar, 17 Nov. 1950, CZA S-92/17.

[9] p. Spiegel, Even HaEzer Regional Council, to Mrs Ya`ari-London, the Committee Handling Infiltrator Victims, Ministry for Social Affairs, 17 May 1955, CZA S-92/17. See also Avraham Kurman, Bnei `Atarot Regional Council, to Mrs Ya`ari-London, 6 Jan. 1954, CZA S-92/17. A brief list of payments to victims of infiltrators—possibly compiled by the Security Section of the Settlement Dept.—entitled 'Payments to Victims of Infiltration up to March 1954', covering Oct. 1953-Mar. 1954 and detailing payments to some two dozen families totalling 1 £6,895.84, is in CZA S-92/17.

[10] A. Sprinzak, Nir-`Am Regional Co-ordinator, to Ikar, 25 July 1954, CZA S-92/20.

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A rough idea of the scale of direct damage done by infiltrators to a border settlement can be garnered from Kibbutz Yad Mordechai's archive. Yad Mordechai, just north of the Gaza Strip, was one of the hardest hit settlements. In early 1952 the kibbutz secretariat assessed its losses at the hands of infiltrators in 1950-51 as I£5,332 ('400 meters of 4" irrigation pipes worth I£320; 200 metres of 6" pipes worth 1£200; 480 metres of 3" pipes worth 1£380; one cow worth 1£350 . . .' etc.).[11] At the start of 1953 the kibbutz assessed losses from infiltration during the six-weeks from 30 October to 14 December 1952 at 1£2,800. The infiltrations often cost the kibbutz large amounts of water (for which it had to pay the water company)—lost when infiltrators stole irrigation pipes, leaving the taps open.[12]

According to IDF intelligence, direct economic damage to Israel by the infiltrators amounted to 1£307,000 in 1950, 1£225,000 in 1951, I£517,000 in 1952, and I£583,000 in 1953. (Of this last sum I£343,000 was accounted for by infiltrators along the Jordanian border, and I£88,000 worth of property was eventually retrieved or returned to Israel or its owners. Gaza Strip infiltrators were responsible for I£235,000 worth of damage and property stolen, of which I£48,000 worth was recovered.)

In 1954 infiltrators stole or damaged Israeli property worth I£629,250: in January 1954, there was I£30,000 worth of damage, in February I£73,000, in November I£23,000, and in December I£20,000 (all figures are after the deduction of property recovered by either Israel police or under the aegis of the MACs).[13] In 1955 Israel suffered I£263,000 in direct

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[11] Yad Mordechai to Hof Ashkelon Regional Council, 9 Mar. 1952, Yad Mordechai Archive 11 (Security), corres. 1948-60. A rough idea of what such figures meant can be gleaned from the fact that the Israel State budget for fiscal year 1952/3 stood at I£300 million (roughly $260 million at the then current exchange rate). In fiscal year 1953/4 the state budget stood at I£400 million (then roughly $300 million); in fiscal year 1954/5, at I£650 million (roughly $350 million). The $350 million of fiscal year 1954/5 had the purchasing power of roughly NIS 3 billion in Israeli prices and currency in 1990 (about $1.3 billion). I am grateful to David Brodet, in 1991 the director of the Israeli State budget, for these figures and calculations.

[12] Yad Mordechai to Hof Ashkelon Regional Council, 8 Jan. 1953, Yad Mordechai Archive 11 (Security), corres. 1948-60; interview with Yitzhak ('Icho') Reis, Yad Mordechai, 14 Oct. 1991.

[13] Harkabi, acting DMI, to the bureau of the IDF CGS, 12 May 1953, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph; 'Infiltration—A Survey of the Problems of Infiltration into Israel in 1954', M. Novick, head of Israel Police Special Branch, June 1955, CZA S92-11; 'Infiltration—Monthly Report—Dec. 1954', Israel Police Special Branch/Minorities Section, Jan. 1955, ISA FM 2592/18; Harkabi's figures must be taken with a grain of salt. On 25 October 1953 the FM sent the Israeli Representative to the UN the following estimates of total damage done by infiltration along the *Jordanian* frontier, based on 'police estimates': 1950—'I£307,000'; 1951—'I£225,000'; 1952—'I£424,000 (accurate)'; 1953—'I£317,000 (accurate until 1.10.53)' (foreign minister to Israel mission, UN, 25 Oct. 1953, ISA FM 2949/2). A cursory look at the figures indicates that either Harkabi or the FM or both had made a mistake. The figures could not be true both for the Jordanian border alone *and* for all of Israel's borders.

damage by infiltrators,[14] and during the first four months of 1956 a further I£150,000 worth (most caused by sabotage during the Egyptian Fedayeen raids of April).[15]

(The bulk of this damage was to several dozen border settlements (subsequently compensated by the government and the Jewish Agency). The hardest-hit areas, in terms of material losses, were the Coastal Plain area from Binyamina southwards, through Petah Tikva, to Rehovot and Gedera. Some 75 per cent of the losses were due to the theft of farm animals, and some 15 per cent agricultural equipment.[16]) Sharett put the damage to Israel higher, telling the American ambassador to Tel Aviv in early 1953 that annual losses from infiltration were between I£750,000 and I£1 million. In 1952, he said, infiltrators had stolen 869 farm animals, 2,000 metres of irrigation pipes, thirteen kilometres of electrical wire, and water pumps.[17] Eban, Israel's ambassador to the United States and the United Nations, went further, claiming, in March 1953, that 'the value of property stolen or damaged' by infiltrators in 1952 was 'estimated at well over one million dollars'.[18]

It is likely that Sharett's (and Eban's) figures were exaggerated—probably deliberately, to impress upon the United States and the United Nations the gravity of the problem. A police assessment from March 1953

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[14] Israel Police Special Branch monthly reports on infiltration, Jan.-Dec. 1955, CZA S92-11.

[15] Monthly reports on infiltration by Israel Police Special Branch, Jan.-Apr. 1956, CZA S92-11.

[16] 'Infiltration—Annual Survey, 1.1.52-31.12.52', ISA FM 2402/12; 'General Summary of the Situation on Israel's Borders in September [1954] Compared to Previous Months', unsigned (but probably by IDF Intelligence Branch) and undated, ISA FM 2429/8 aleph.

[17] M. Elitzur to Israel Embassy, London, 3 Feb. 1953, ISA FM 2592/18.

[18] Eban to UN secretary-general, 16 Mar. 1953, PRO FO 371-104779. A memorandum produced, apparently, by the Israel Embassy in Washington a month later put the 'damage to facilities and installations' by infiltrators in the course of 1952 at '$3,000,000' (or just over 1 per cent of the Israel state budget). The memorandum added that Israel's material losses from damage by infiltrators in Jan. 1953 amounted to approximately '$150,000' and, in Feb. 1953, to approximately '$120,000' ('Notes on Border Incidents along the Israel Frontier', unsigned, 22 Apr. 1953, ISA FM 2436/8). Senior Israeli officials speaking to Western representatives seem to have thrown out figures without checking and to have exaggerated Israel's material losses from infiltration. Some officials commented on this. In one memorandum, from 12 May 1953, possibly produced by the Foreign Ministry Research Dept., entitled 'Arab Marauding in Israel', the sentence reading 'The total damage to property [in Israel by infiltrators] for the year 1952 amounted to about one million dollars' is partly crossed out and the figure 'I£356,000' is penned in (ISA FM 2474/13 aleph). In another memorandum, A. Eilan, a Research Dept. official, asserted in late 1953 that all Israeli figures—- f Israeli losses in material and personnel, and of Arab losses for the pre-1951 period—were 'guesswork', and that Israeli officials continued to give out contradictory numbers for the more recent period: 'figures quoted by Eban and figures given out at home have differed on occasion. The differences *may* have been caused by different rates of exchange having been used. The cause is unimportant, but from now on, only one set of figures must be quoted. I propose that we stick to figures given by Eban, right or wrong' (Eilan to director general, 22 Nov. 1953, ISA FM 2428/4 aleph).

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cautioned that figures for losses and damage due to infiltration must take into consideration in-built exaggerations. The figures were partly based on reports by the victims, who were interested in increasing the amount of compensation. The victim-settlers also occasionally reported as stolen crops that they could afterwards sell (making a double profit).[19] Also, occasionally, thefts were attributed to infiltrators that were probably committed by fellow Israelis—for the government paid no compensation for routine theft.[20]

Indirect Economic Damage

Such were the *direct* costs of infiltration. But far larger and more significant were the *indirect* costs of infiltration. But the figures here—relating to the vast IDF and police expenditure on anti-infiltration measures and equipment, settlers' working days lost to guard duty, losses of produce due to infiltrator thefts and sabotage or to the fear of infiltrators, losses due to the abandonment of border sites by settlers, government revenue and taxes lost due to smuggling, and so on—are far more problematic. Available statistics are almost inevitably incomplete.

One Agriculture Ministry report from early 1955 speaks of the average Negev settlement having to lose 3,150 work days per year on guard duty (valued at I£25,000). Perimeter lighting, searchlights, and patrols cost each settlement some I£4,000 annually, with another I£3,000 per settlement to collect irrigation pipes each evening and set them up again each morning rather than have them stolen. Occasionally, the value of what was stolen or damaged by infiltrators exceeded the compensation eventually received. The Agriculture Ministry estimated that each family in the Negev, which was essentially one large border area, spent some I£466 extra per year due to infiltration.[21]

The state's expenditure on perimeter fencing and lighting for the border settlements was vast, although many of the older settlements already had such lighting and fencing before 1949. Some settlements required only the expansion or up-dating of existing systems. In the two fiscal years 1953/4

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[19] 'Infiltration—Annual Survey, 1.1.52-31.12.52', ISA FM 2402/12. The report also mentioned several considerations that leaned in the other direction: (*a*) the victims of infiltrator thefts might not in all cases have reported all the damage done because some of the stolen objects may themselves have been stolen by the victims or purchased illegally; (*b*) the valuation of the stolen goods, such as irrigation piping, was made in Israeli pounds whereas to purchase such piping anew, necessarily from abroad, would have cost far more in real terms (given the artificial official I£:$ exchange rate).

[20] See, e.g., Weitz to Y. Schiff, head of the Investigations Division, Israel police, 23 June 1952, and Schiff to Weitz, 27 June 1952, both in CZA S-15/9786.

[21] N. Nir, Development Officer, Agriculture Ministry, to Prime Minister Sharett, 9 Feb. 1955, ISA PMO 5433/23.

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and 1954/5, the Jewish Agency cumulatively spent I£600,000—a third of this funded by the Ministry of Labour—on perimeter fencing. (Another I£1.05 million was spent on electrification; I£1.5 million on access roads; and I£175,000 on telephone lines to border settlements.)[22] In mid-1954, when the government decided to allocate large sums for fencing and perimeter lighting, IDF Southern Command estimated that the required materials and work would cost, in its sector, I£501,130:I£258,423 for fences in thirty-six settlements, I£212,217 for perimeter lighting in twenty-seven settlements, and I£30,490 for electronic alarms in forty-four settlements.[23] A perimeter fence for an average-sized *moshav* in mid-1953 cost about I£14,000; perimeter lighting appears to have cost about I£6,500-10,000 per settlement. A major part of the cost was the installation of generators (about I£4,500 each).[24]

Another indirect expense was incurred in destroying the desolate, semi-ruined Arab villages, left over from 1948 which, in the 1950s, provided infiltrators with hiding places and way-stations. Manpower and equipment were required, most of the levelling being carried out by IDF engineers. Occasionally, the settlements did the job themselves.[25]

But probably the greatest infiltration-related costs stemmed from the need to guard the settlements. Throughout 1949-56 the protection afforded by the IDF and the police was insufficient. The settlers complained that too little was being done and infiltrators seemed to enjoy complete freedom of movement, particularly at night.

In the course of late 1949-50 the IDF and the police began subcontracting much routine guarding—perimeter patrolling and ambushing—around the border settlements to civilians, mostly Haganah/IDF veterans in each settlement. Pre-state area commanders (*mefakdei eizor* or *ma"azim*), each responsible for the security of his own settlement, were reconfirmed in office and others were appointed in the new settlements. In each settlement, half a dozen or more guards, called *muhzakim* (Hebrew for 'kept ones'), were hired, and each local security contingent, thus formed, coordinated its activities with and was overseen by the local IDF command

[22] Settlement Dept. to S. Peres, Defence Ministry director general, 8 Feb. 1954, CZA S-15/9787. Electrification, roads, and telephones were, to some degree, expenses that would have been incurred by the Agency and the settlements even in the absence of security problems. But infiltration certainly made solving these problems more urgent. The Settlement Dept. included these expenditures, as well as outlays on settlement guards, under the heading 'Security Budget'.

[23] Col. M. Amit, OC Operations Dept., to Weitz, 13 June 1954, CZA S-15/9787.

[24] Settlement Dept. to Jerusalem District, 26 June 1953, CZA S-15/9787; E. Kroll to Settlement Dept. directorate, 8 Dec. 1952, CZA S-15/9786.

[25] Kroll to Settlement Dept. directorate, 8 Dec. 1952, CZA S-15/9786. The Jewish Agency estimated that levelling the remains of one site, Zakariya, on the western edge of the Jerusalem Corridor, would cost some I£20,000 (at I£8.5 per bulldozer work hour).

(*gush* or bloc). The salaries of the *ma"azim* and *muhzakim* were paid by the Treasury and the Jewish Agency. There were, all told, somewhere between 1,000 and 2,000 *ma"azim* and *muhzakim* on the state's payroll during 1950-6.

The poor security situation in 1949-50 and the paramilitary system of paid security guards necessitated the establishment in 1950 of the Jewish Agency Settlement Department's own Security Section, headed by Avraham Ikar, a veteran senior Haganah officer.[26] Ikar co-ordinated the outlying settlements' security needs with the IDF and the police, supervised the appointment of *ma"azim* and *muhzakim*, arranged their payment, and set up guard duty rosters. He also set up permanent mobile patrols (which he called *nodedot*, recalling the Haganah's patrols of the late 1930s) in several troublesome areas, including the Jerusalem Corridor and the Galilee Panhandle. These patrols, operational in 1951, and perhaps later, supplemented IDF and police patrols and ambushes, and were controlled by the regional IDF commands.[27]

The system was extremely costly. In the fiscal year 1953/4 the Jewish Agency spent I£150,000 on the maintenance of *muhzakim*. The following year it spent I£200,000 on *muhzakim* and I£200,000 on *ma"azim*.[28] From May 1955 the IDF maintained 142 *ma"azim*, 320 *muhzakim*, and 35 armourers in the border settlements in the South. Each *ma"az* (area commander) was paid a yearly salary of I£3,000; each *muhzak* (guard), I£2,200. The total IDF (meaning Jewish Agency-Treasury) expenditure on guards for the southern border settlements was thus about I£1.2 million annually.[29] A similar number of security men was maintained by the police in the settlements in the northern half of the country, between Beit Govrin and Metulla. The police paid each *ma"az* I£2,500 per year and each guard I£2,200. The outlay, of I£1.178 million, was, again, shared equally by the Jewish Agency and the Treasury.[30]

The number and cost of security personnel employed in the settlements by the police and IDF—and paid for by the Jewish Agency and Treasury—rose steadily during the mid-1950s, as did the number of settlements. By

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[26] Lt.-Col. Y. Prolov, OC IDF Operations Dept., to 'Distribution F', Weitz, etc., 27 Oct. 1950, CZA S-15/4272.

[27] Ikar to Settlement Dept., 3 Jan. 1951; Ikar to Settlement Dept., 28 Jan. 1951; Ikar to Eliav, 10 Jan. 1951, all in CZA S-15/9786.

[28] Settlement Dept. to Peres, 8 Feb. 1954, CZA S-15/9787.

[29] 'Conclusions of the Committee Determining the Upkeep of Guards and Ma"azim in the South', undated and unsigned, but with accompanying letter from Ikar to Col. M. Amit, OC IDF Operations Dept., 28 Feb. 1957, CZA S-91/9. See also Col. M. Kashti, OC Finance Branch, Defence Ministry, to the General Auditor, 1 Apr. 1957, CZA S-92/15; S. Zvisman to I. Shaul, 18 May 1956, CZA S-92/15.

[30] Settlement Dept. to Y. Arnon, Treasury, 18 May 1955, CZA S-92/15. See also Shaul to Security Section, Settlement Dept., 9 Mar. 1956, CZA S-92/15; T. Kazin, Israel police, to Ikar, 21 Nov. 1956, CZA S-92/15.

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January 1957 the police—responsible for the northern half of the country —were employing 556 settlement security staff at a monthly cost of 1£94,000.[31] To basic salary, the Jewish Agency and Treasury had to add medical insurance and National Insurance Institute costs, and travel, clothing, and vehicle allowances.[32] All told, the Jewish Agency and the Treasury each spent somewhere between I£1.2 million and I£1.5 million annually in the mid-1950s for the maintenance and salaries of settlement guards around the country.[33]

(Various other targets along the borders also required protection, and were guarded by civilian guards. Prominent among these was the Mekorot (national water company) pipeline in the north-western Negev, which supplied most of the northern Negev settlements. The pipeline—and Mekorot drilling sites—were frequent targets of infiltrating saboteurs from the Gaza Strip during the 1950s. Initially, the IDF maintained that Mekorot's security was the company's own responsibility,[34] but eventually troops took part in defending the lifeline.)

But paid security personnel were only part of the story. Inevitably, other residents in each settlement themselves did much guard duty, including patrols and ambushes. In settlements in the Jerusalem Corridor, the Samaria foothills, and the South, adult males did guard duty every other night or every third night for weeks and months on end, then had to put in a full work day in their fields. In Moshav Beit Nekofa in the Corridor, in February 1952, twenty of the thirty-five adult males were engaged daily in security matters (guard duty, ambushes, patrols, and IDF reserve duty).[35] In Moshav Neve-Yamin, in the Coastal Plain, the adult males were reported in March 1953 to be doing guard duty 'every night'.[36] The situation at Beit Nekofa was not much improved by mid-1953: there were forty-two couples, and twelve persons were on guard each night—meaning that each adult male stood guard two or three times a week.[37]

In many *moshavim* during the early 1950s, the guard roster simply broke down as settlers refused to go out to guard[38] and the police and IDF

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[31] Kazin to Ikar, 22 Feb. 1957, CZA S-92/15.

[32] Kazin to Ikar, 21 Nov. 1956, CZA S-92/15.

[33] The Jewish Agency estimated that its total outlays on security—including guards' salaries, building access roads, and the installation of perimeter fencing and lighting, and telephones—was It[3.875 million in fiscal years 1953/4 and 1954/5 combined (Settlement Dept. to Peres, 8 Feb. 1954, CZA S-15/9787).

[34] Maj. Y. Zacherevich to Ikar, 16 Mar. 1951; Eshkol to Ben-Gurion, 21 Feb. 1951; A. Shemion to Eshkol, 6 Feb. 1951; Eshkol to Sapir, 1 Aug. 1951—all in CZA S-15/9786.

[35] Eshkol to Ben-Gurion, 5 Feb. 1951, CZA S-15/9786.

[36] 'Neve Yamin', an unsigned report dated 23 Mar. 1953, CZA S-92/17.

[37] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 21 June 1953, BGA. See also Eshkol to acting defence minister, 8 Oct. 1953, CZA S-15/9787, for the situation in Mishmar Ayalon Bet.

[38] See, e.g., 'Quarterly Report' for the period 1 Jan. 1952-31 Mar. 1952, CZA S-63/92. Ikar noted that, while there was orderly guard duty in most of the new *moshavim* in the

(Footnote continued on next page)

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frequently complained to the Jewish Agency about such guard truancy in the new settlements.[39] The Jewish Agency, for its part, often complained that the IDF, insensitive to the settlers' burden, persisted in calling up for reserve duty inhabitants in short-handed *moshavim*, further increasing the remaining adult males' guard burden.[40] The IDF and police imposed penalties on settlements found unguarded or improperly guarded. At one point, as punishment, the IDF withheld salaries of *muhzakim* in particular settlements.[41]

The guard situation in the Negev remained grave through the early 1950s. In March 1954 the heads of the Negev regional councils complained to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee that infiltrator depredations and the burden of guard duty were sapping the settlers' will to stay. 'There are *kibbutzim*', they wrote, 'where the number of members has dropped to 30 per cent of the original number and there are settlements where as many as 50 houses are empty.' In some new settlements, only ten families were left who 'were just waiting for an opportunity to leave'. Guarding was costing the Negev settlers a total of some I£500,000 per year. The settlers demanded the stationing of an IDF unit in the area, increased army patrolling, protection of the forthcoming harvest, the destruction of buildings still standing in empty Arab villages, and help in guard duty.[42] A year later the northern Negev settlements were still complaining about the burden of guard duty. At Kibbutz Nahal-Oz, next to the Gaza Strip, sixteen persons were employed in guard duty each day—eleven along the perimeter fences at night, two at the kibbutz entrance, and three guarding tractors and irrigation pipes by day. This was apart from ambushes they mounted at night in the fields during harvest. The kibbutz had a population of only some seventy adults. 'The security burden has become unbearable,'

(Footnote continued from previous page)

Corridor and the south, there were also exceptions. At Moshav Giv`ati and at Belt Ezra there was 'no guard duty'. In Moshav Tarom the inhabitants simply 'failed to mount guard'. At Hodiya, about half the inhabitants did guard duty; the other half refused. At Moshav Yish'i there were inhabitants who refused to stand guard.

[39] Y. Sahar, Police Inspector General, to Eshkol, 7 Apr. 1950, S-15/4272; Levy Avrahami, Jerusalem District Police Commander, to director of Settlement Dept., 29 Jan. 1952, CZA S-15/9786.

[40] See, e.g., ? Sept. 1953, Col. M. Amit, OC IDF Operations Dept., to Weitz; Weitz to Amit, 11 Oct. 1953; Weitz to Eshkol, 6 Oct. 1953; Eshkol to acting defence minister, 8 Oct. 1953, all in CZA S-15/9787.

[41] Ikar to Settlement Dept., 24 Dec. 1950, CZA S-15/4272.

[42] Arye Efrat (Sha`ar HaNegev), Avraham Roseman (`Azata), Ya`akov Shimshon (Merhavim), Moshe Castro (Hevel Ma`on), and Haim Isaacowitz (Bnei Shimon), 7 Mar. 1954, and Arye Efrat to Southern District Commissioner, Beersheba, 28 Mar. 1954, both in Sha`ar HaNegev Regional Council Archive. The area just north and east of the Gaza Strip in the 1950s was still referred to as part of the 'western' or 'northern Negev'. Today the area is regarded as the southern coastal plain or the northern Negev approaches.

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complained the kibbutz secretary. 'We need immediate help.' Government officials promised that the state would hire outside guards.[43]

Only in spring 1955 was there a substantial easing of the border settlers' guard duty burden. The gradual increase in the settlements' population reduced the amount of guard duty imposed on each inhabitant. The increase in the number of border settlers who had done army service also tended to distribute the burden more widely. Moreover, in early 1955 the authorities officially adopted a guideline that settlers should not have to do more than three nights of guard duty a month. From May 1955 the government allocated funds to increase substantially the number of outside guards in the border settlements.[44]

The Sense of Insecurity and the Abandonment of Sites

Among the more damaging—if somewhat ungaugeable—costs of infiltration was its psychological impact. The constant thefts, robberies, and sabotage, the sniping, and the occasional murder had a cumulative adverse affect, which at times expressed itself in terror and panic. In certain areas the population lived for months with a sense of insecurity. A graphic description of one infiltrator-beset *moshav*, Mishmar Ayalon, was provided by an observer in December 1951: most of the adult males worked away from the settlement during the week and returned home on weekends. 'In the evenings the women are afraid to remain in their homes and gather together with their children in a number of houses in the centre of the settlement.'[45] Nor was the situation at the *moshav* much better two years later. People still huddled together for safety. As one official put it, 'settlers leave their houses at night and join 4-5 [other] families in one room, so that there's a feeling of security'.[46] In 1955—6 this sense of insecurity spread well beyond the imediate border areas, as Egyptian Fedayeen raided around Rehovot and Rishon LeZion in the centre of the country. The Egyptians, aware of the effect of their raids, reported:

> The whole of the Negev was in a state of tension, emergency-footing, and panic. The inhabitants were ordered [by the Israeli authorities] not to leave their homes

[43] 'Oded', Kibbutz Nahal-Oz secretary, to OC Gush Magen, IDF Southern Command, 17 Feb. 1955; Shamai Kahane, Prime Minister's Office, to 'Oded', 12 Apr. 1955, both in Kibbutz Nahal-Oz Archive.

[44] Ikar to Settlement Dept., 9 Sept. 1956, CZA S-15/9789.

[45] 'The Security Situation in Tal Shahar, Kfar Daniel, Gimzo and Mishmar Ayalon', unsigned, 31 Dec. 1951, CZA S-92-17.

[46] y. Berginski at meeting of Jewish Agency Executive, 1 July 1953, CZA S100-87.

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after sunset. Indeed, the tranquillity that used to prevail in the villages and cities far from the armistice line has turned into terror, panic and dread.[47]

The most serious by-product of this demoralization was the abandonment by families—and sometimes by whole communities—of specific border settlements. Thus, some half dozen *moshavim*, mainly populated by new immigrants from Muslim countries, were completely abandoned during this period.

No kibbutzim were abandoned. The veteran kibbutzim had long lived with Arab marauding and terrorism; their members were highly motivated; and they were generally well organized for defence. When the theft-oriented infiltrations increased and turned increasingly violent, the kibbutzim coped. But the new immigrant settlements were different. Hundreds of *moshavim* had been set up along the borders in 1949 and the early 1950s. Many of the new immigrants were illiterate and poorly motivated, and lacked the pioneering spirit, conditioning, and fortitude of their neighbours in the kibbutzim. In April 1950 Eshkol, director of the Jewish Agency Settlement Department, fearing that unchecked infiltrator depredations might subvert the whole settlement venture along the borders, voiced his concern in a series of letters to Ben-Gurion. Dozens of border settlements were being set up, he wrote:

> [But] new immigrants, because of their wanderings, anomie and lethargy—are like leaves in the wind, who will tremble before any storm . . . [Much] time will have to pass before they adjust and are educated to be self-confident and [able] to defend their settlement . . . . At present they benefit from the infiltrators' [own] lack of initiative and daring. But we cannot rely on such miracles . . . We fear day and night for them.

Eshkol hoped that a professional corps of hired guards would be set up—and in time, 'in order to avert a catastrophe'.[48]

Immigrant towns further from the border were also affected, as emerges from documentation dealing with the first years of Jewish settlement in Ashkelon, the former Arab town of Majdal, north of the Gaza Strip. The bulk of the town's population had fled to Gaza in 1948, and in the course of 1950 its remaining Arab inhabitants were transferred to the Strip. In January 1950 a member of the advisory committee of the Military Government wrote: 'There is a severe security problem in the town. [Infiltrator] gangs are active in the area . . . The guard duty must be

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[47] FM (quoting Egyptian reports) to Israel missions abroad (Paris, etc.), 10 Apr. 1956, ISA FM 2439/7.

[48] Eshkol to Ben-Gurion, 12 Apr. 1950, ISA PMO 5433/23. See also Eshkol to Ben-Gurion, 5 Feb. 1951, CZA S-15/9786.

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increased . . . Instead of a guard roster of 15 men per night, 4-6 show up.[49]

The incessant infiltrator raids also undermined the government's ability to persuade new immigrants to settle in border areas,[50] an aspect of the problem highlighted by the Haifa District assistant superintendent of police in a conversation with an American diplomat in early 1955:

> Infiltration was becoming ever more serious and . . . apparently the most urgent part of the problem was that the [Israel] Government's plans to settle the border areas and the Negev were being upset. The new immigrants and the city people are reported to be resisting being settled in the Negev, and people already there are beginning to try to move back into the largr cities to gain . . . security.[51]

In 1953 Jewish Agency officials reported 'an uprising' of immigrants from Iraq, who refused to move into new housing in the town of Kfar Saba, near the border. Immigrants living in the town's transit camp, some 400 metres from the armistice line, were moved out by the army, which was apparently more concerned about the possibility of sniping from across the line than infiltrator incursions.[52]

But the focus of the authorities in the early 1950s was on departure and flight from settlements rather than on the problem of compelling new immigrants to settle along the border. The large-scale departure or flight from the border settlements occurred in waves and was often linked to an upsurge of infiltration in each area. Increased infiltration meant increased guard duty.

At the beginning of 1951, the 'wild security situation' had led to 'mass abandonment' of Moshav Tal Shahar, near Ramle; about half the population 'had fled out of fear'.[53] Within months, the remaining inhabitants, their guard duty doubled by the first wave of departures, left as well. The

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[49] 'Protocol No. 9', 11 Jan. 1950, and 'Protocol No. 12', 1 Feb. 1950, the Advisory Committee to the Military Government in the Negev, Ashkelon Municipal Archive, File 37. Eight months later, following the transfer of most of the Arab population to the Strip, the situation seemed, at least temporarily, much improved. One Ashkelon municipal councillor, Eliezer Rubin, said: 'The number of infiltrations of Arabs into the area has dropped completely [*sic*]. One may assume that the thefts [now occurring] are being carried out by Jews.' Rubin was reacting to a statement by another councillor, David Feldman, who had declared: 'Thefts have multiplied in the town . . . . Kitchen utensils, clothes, goats have been stolen, as well as two cows. It is difficult to ascertain whether this [is the work of] individual Arabs or organized gangs of Jews' (protocol of municipal council meeting, 8 Oct. 1950, Ashkelon Municipal Archive).

[50] Evans (Tel Aviv) to A. D. M. Ross, FO, 28 Apr. 1953, PRO FO 371-104780 ER1091/130.

[51] W. P. Chase, US consul, Haifa, to State Dept., 17 Mar. 1955, NA RG 59, Box 2691, 684a.86/3-1755.

[52] Eshkol at meeting of Jewish Agency Executive, 12 Jan. 1953, and Berginski at meeting of the Executive, 9 Feb. 1953, both in CZA S100-84.

[53] Eshkol to Col. Pri-Har, OC Coastal Plain District, 9 Jan. 1951, CZA S-15/9786; Eshkol to Ben-Gurion, 5 Feb. 1951, CZA S-15/9786; Ben-Gurion diary entry for 15 Jan. 1951, BGA.

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site was resettled by a new *gar`in* (settlement group) several months later. But the new settlers, too, were quickly 'exhausted' by the burden of guard duty. In December 1951 forty houses still stood empty in the settlement; no one wanted to move in, despite the acute housing shortage around the country.

A similar situation prevailed in Gimzo, near the Latrun Salient, which was reportedly raided by infiltrators 'every night'. Thirty houses stood empty; new immigrants refused to move in. At neighbouring Kfar Daniel, many of the inhabitants had left and the others spoke of leaving soon. At Mishmar Ayalon the inhabitants were still *in situ*, according to one observer, only because 'they had nowhere else to go'.[54] A wave of infiltrations also undermined morale at Moshav Mata, in the Jerusalem Corridor, the settlers complaining that they could not guard nights and work the following day.[55] Among the other *moshavim* or 'work settlements' (*kfarei `avoda*) hit hard in late 1951 were `Ajjur Aleph (completely abandoned); Mesilat Zion (some sixty families stayed of 120); Ora (forty-five families left); Kfar `Alar (forty families remained of an original sixty); and Ya`ale (thirty families stayed of an original sixty families). Other Jerusalem Corridor and Upper Galilee settlements hit by departures in the September-December 1951 wave were `Ajjur Bet, Bar-Giora, Qatra-Luzia, Ranen, Pedu'im, Zavdiel, Elyakim, Shlomi, Elifelet (Zangariya), Elkosh, Ya`ara, and Goren.[56]

The infiltrators were managing to make off with large amounts of livestock and agricultural equipment, night after night. Eshkol warned that the Jewish Agency would stop providing the new *moshavim* with equipment and farm animals because these 'sooner or later ended up in `Abdullah's [i.e. Arab] hands'. Indeed, the Agency 'could not continue establishing immigrant settlements . . . in border areas' in the absence of 'a basic change in the defence system . . . in confronting the infiltrators'.[57]

In early 1953 the settlers at Neve Yamin complained of a large increase in infiltration: ten cows were stolen within a fortnight. In March, infiltrators hit the settlement 'every other night, sometimes twice a night'. All the adult males stood guard 'every night'. The settlement had no perimeter lighting and no telephone. The settlement had a deficit of I£1,500 from fiscal year 1952/3 as a result of security expenditure. There was 'a real

[54] 'The Security Situation in Tal Shahar, Kfar Daniel, Gimzo and Mishmar Ayalon', CZA S-92/17.

[55] Y. Zak, the Moshavim Association, to Settlement Dept., 30 Dec. 1951, CZA S-92/17.

[56] Yablonsky to Weitz, 26 Oct. 1951, CZA S-15/9606; 'Movement of Population in the Settlements Appearing in the Article by Amos Eilon (*HaAretz* from 28 December 1951)', Z. Lifshitz (?), 28 Dec. 1951, S-15/9606; Y. Weitz to Eshkol and Giora Yoseftal, 1 Nov. 1951, CZA KKL-5/202641.

[57] R. Doktori, Kfar Azarya, to Ikar, 26 Jan. 1951, CZA S-15/9786; Eshkol to Ben-Gurion, 5 Feb. 1951, CZA S-15/9786.

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danger of a mass abandonment'.[58] Some of the settlers had suffered something akin to a nervous breakdown (*hatkafat-`atzabim kasha*) as a result of infiltration. Fifteen families left the *moshav*.[59]

In the Negev District in spring 1954 there were 'hundreds' of empty houses in the border *moshavim*.[60] Paradoxically, the moment a settlement was partly abandoned, it became—despite the availability of housing—less attractive to potential newcomers, largely because they faced the prospect of extraordinary amounts of guard duty.

A qualification is necessary to the foregoing description. Israel in the 1950s witnessed a general movement from the rural areas to towns and cities, and from 'development areas' to established veteran sites, mostly in the Coastal Plain. The new immigrants, largely from Muslim lands, who had been sent to live in development towns, transit camps in the country-side, and *moshavim*, were often unhappy with their location, and were attracted by the (relative) wealth and job opportunities available in the established hub of the country. The government had decided on a 'centrifugal' policy of dispersing the population, in part for geo-strategic reasons. But many immigrants were lured by the urban centres. Jewish Agency Immigrant Absorption Department director Giora Yoseftal estimated that, during the second half of 1951, about 1,000 families a month had left the *moshavim*, kibbutzim, 'work settlements', and transit camps in the officially designated 'development areas' and moved to inland agricultural settlements, transit camps, towns, and cities.[61]

The abandonment of border settlements by immigrant families was at least to some extent part of this general phenomenon; at least 1,000 new immigrant families appear to have left border *moshavim* in the Galilee, the Jerusalem Corridor, and the south during the last four or five months of 1951. No figures are available for 1952, but between 1 April and 30 October 1953 some 850 new immigrant families (about 4 per cent of the 18,000 new immigrant families in the new non-collective agricultural settlements) left *moshavim* and 'work settlements'—almost all of them in border areas. Another 4 per cent left between 1 November 1953 and 30

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[58] 'Neve Yamin', unsigned report, 23 Mar. 1953, CZA S-92/17.

[59] y. Korn, the Moshavim Association, to Settlement Dept., 12 Apr. 1953, CZA S-15/9786.

[60] Negev District to Settlement Dept. directorate, 14 Apr. 1954, CZA S-15/9787.

[61] Yoseftal, director of the Jewish Agency Immigrant Absorption Dept., to Golda Myerson (Meir), Minister of Labour, 9 Jan. 1952, CZA S-15/9606. It is worth noting perhaps that Yoseftal cited two reasons for this 'wandering':
(1) In all those places far from the city one can earn one's keep only by physical labour, [whereas] in the established town it is possible to live by commerce, etc. (2) In the far-flung areas full employment has not developed during the past few months, [whereas] in the big cities there is full employment.
Yoseftal made no mention of infiltration.

March 1954. Thereafter, the number of those leaving declined substantially: during I April-30 October 1954 the departure rate was 2.6 per cent, and during 1 October 1954-1 April 1955 2.8 per cent.[62] Waves of departure occurred in the second half of 1951[63] and in winter 1952/3. The winter months were particularly trying, partly because of the poor housing conditions.

The Jewish Agency Settlement Department, assisted by the police and the IDF, decided to stop the departures and 'not to allow these wanderings'.[64] A series of harassing tactics were employed to prevent flight from the *moshavim*: police visited settlements where there was a ground-swell for departure and tried to persuade inhabitants to stay put; vehicles were stopped and searched at roadblocks and their drivers forbidden to carry both goods and people together, the passengers usually being forced to walk back to their homes; police searched vehicles to see that nothing being driven out had originally been supplied by the Jewish Agency, etc.[65] The Agency's Immigrant Absorption Department also took part in the battle against the 'wandering', and the department's officials barred the 'wanderers' from being absorbed in transit camps.[66] Yoseftal proposed that a law be enacted giving the state authority to determine where people should live and suggested that the immigrants' ration cards be used as a tool to force them to live where the state dictated,[67] but his proposals were not implemented.

The IDF was also upset by the flight from the border *moshavim* and especially annoyed when the Agency's Settlement Department assisted settlers in leaving sites (as occurred in Ya`ale in 1952). The settlements, however vulnerable, were seen as part of the national defensive network; their abandonment created gaps in the fence and fresh access routes for infiltration into the country. Blame for the departures was laid on inadequate housing, and the Settlement Department was urged to build permanent housing quickly in places where settlers were still living in tin huts .[68]

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[62] R. Weitz, to Agriculture Minister K. Luz, 3 Jan. 1956, CZA S-15/9606.

[63] This wave seems to have badly hit settlements inhabited by Jewish immigrants from Yemen particularly. The Yemenite community's representative in the Knesset, Shimon Gridi, tabled a motion for the agenda to discuss the problem of the 'mass abandonment of settlements by Yemenites' (*Divrei HaKnesset*, 10/1 (28 Nov. 1951), 563. M. Hazani, of the HaPoel HaMizrahi Party, corrected him a few weeks later when he declared that the problem of the abandonment by settlers was 'not a matter of this or that [ethnic] community' (*Divrei HaKnesset*, 11/1 (29 Jan. 1952), 1131-2).

[64] R. Weitz to Districts, 6 May 1951, CZA S-15/9606.

[65] Ikar to R. Weitz, 13 Dec. 1951, CZA S-15/9606.

[66] R. Weitz to M. HaNegev, 30 Oct. 1951, CZA S-15/9606.

[67] Yoseftal to Myerson (Meir), 9 Jan. 1952, CZA S-15/9606. See also B. Nahir to Contracts and Guarantees Section, Settlement Dept., 6 July 1955, CZA S-15/9606.

[68] Maj. A. Harsina, IDF General Staff Branch, to Settlement Dept., 16 May 1952; R. Weitz to Harsina, 15 June 1952, both in CZA S-15/9696.

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Without doubt, the border settlers in the new *moshavim* did suffer from—and complain about—poor housing, lack of work, poor pay, lack of heating, inadequate access roads and transport, a feeling of isolation, lack of telephones, and a dearth of agricultural supplies and equipment.[69] But contemporary correspondence from the settlements seems to emphasize that infiltration and the burdens it imposed were a major, if not *the* major, cause of flight and departure during the bleak early 1950s:

> The main reason stems from anxiety about security at the site [i.e. Zakariya, a Corridor *moshav*] due to infiltrators. Though the settlers exaggerate and blow up the danger from infiltration, the truth is that the few kilometres that separate the settlement from the border are open to recurrent infiltration, which costs the [settlers] in property and keeps the inhabitants in perpetual tension and permanent fear of loss of life.

The adult males were doing guard duty once every three or four nights. About a dozen families abandoned Zakariya in December 1951.[70]

Occasionally, the abandonment of settlements or the departure of individual families can be linked to specific acts of terrorist infiltration. Thus, several families left Moshav Beit Nekofa, in the Jerusalem Corridor, in June 1953 in the wake of one attack.[71] The murder of a watchman and the wounding of another at the nearby *moshav* of Zano'ah in December 1952 led to 'great panic' and to 'many departures'—which further undermined the morale of those who stayed put.[72] In March 1955 settlers in the *moshavim* of Maslul and Patish, east of Gaza, became demoralized and prepared to leave after a murderous attack by infiltrators on a wedding party at Patish.[73]

Infiltration also harmed the settlements' development in other ways. Fear that infiltrators would steal their animals occasionally led settlers to destroy their cows, goats, and sheep and sell them off for meat; milk and cheese production was thus abandoned. Some hard-pressed settlers, impoverished

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[69] 'The Desire to Wander among the Inhabitants of Zakariya', unsigned and undated (probably from Dec. 1951), CZA S-92/17.

[70] 'Undercurrent of Abandonment in Zakariya', unsigned and undated (probably by Ikar from Dec. 1951 or Jan. 1952), CZA S-92/17. This was also the view of Jewish Agency Executive member Eliahu Dobkin (Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 14 July 1954, CZA S100-94). Some Agency officials, such as R. Weitz, sometimes suspected that many of the departees were simply tired of the pioneering life and used the infiltration bugbear as a handy excuse for departure.

[71] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 21 June 1953, BGA. See also A. Efrat to Police Minister Shitrit, 23 Feb. 1954, Sha`ar HaNegev Regional Council Archive.

[72] Capt. Gavriel Barashi, Gush Beit Natif, to 16th Brigade, 4 Dec. 1952, IDFA (no file number supplied). The departures from Zano`ah—and from `Ajjur—are cited in 'The Infiltration into Israel', IDF Intelligence Branch, undated but with covering note IDF/Intelligence Dept. to the foreign minister's secretary, 20 January 1954, ISA FM 2402/12.

[73] B. Habas, *Tnu`ah LeLo Shem* (Tel Aviv, 1964), 74-7.

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by infiltrators' thefts, sold farm animals to repay debts. At Neve Yamin, the farmers violated rationing laws and illegally sold some thirty cows to Tel Aviv butchers.[74] Ironically, the better a *moshav* was able to fend off infiltrators, secure its property, and prosper, the more attractive it became as a target for infiltrator depredation.[75] Settlers thus thought twice about increasing production of irrigated crops or raising sheep and cattle—since that would force them to increase their guard load.[76] Some border settlers refrained from setting up field irrigation equipment for fear of infiltrator thievery.[77]

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[74] 'Black Market Deals in Moshav Neve Yamin', 29 Mar. 1953, unsigned, and 'Neve Yamin', both in CZA S-92/17.

[75] Negev District to Settlement Dept., 14 Apr. 1954, CZA S-15/9787.

[76] Efrat to Police Minister Shitrit, 8 Jan. 1954, and Efrat to director general, Defence Ministry, 23 Feb. 1954, both in Sha`ar HaNegev Regional Council Archive.

[77] Moshav Beit "Arif to Ikar, 17 Nov. 1950, CZA S-92/17.

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5
The Israeli Defensive Responses to Infiltration

From the first, Israel clearly appreciated the hazards mass infiltration posed for the new state. As Israeli intelligence put it in June 1948: 'The infiltration of individual Arabs, ostensibly for reaping and threshing, alone, could in time bring with it the re-establishment [of the refugees] in the villages, something which could seriously endanger many of our achievements during the six months of the war.'[1] On 11 June, the day the First Truce started, Yosef Weitz, of the JNF, called Ben-Gurion's aide, Levi Eshkol (then Shkolnik), and asked: "'What's going to be our position on Arabs who infiltrate back . . . They may return in multitudes to their conquered villages, and we're forbidden to shoot [by the truce]?" He [Eshkol] said that this was indeed a poser, and he would bring it before Ben-Gurion this morning.'[2]

Pre-Truce predictions of increased Arab infiltration back to abandoned villages were borne out, and the IDF Intelligence Department foresaw a 'serious danger that these villagers would re-establish themselves in their villages deep behind our front lines' and, with the renewal of hostilities, would serve the Arab armies as a fifth column. ' . . . There is no time to be lost in taking a decision,' the Department concluded.[3]

Weitz and IDF intelligence were pressing for a clear-cut decision to bar all refugee infiltration into Israel, be it with the aim of permanent resettlement or cultivation and collection of abandoned possessions. There was an instinctive fear that the latter would naturally evolve into the former. Even before the Truce, IDF units had received orders to use fire to prevent infiltration and harvesting along and behind the lines.[4] On 16 June the Cabinet, steered by Ben-Gurion and Sharett, formally decided against the return of the refugees. Orders went out to all front-line units to bar the passage of Arab civilians through the lines, whether those turned back were seeking to resettle or had come on brief foraging expeditions. Because Arab cultivators and foragers were getting through in large

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[1] 'BaTziburiyut Ha`Aravit', 11 June 1948, Foreign Ministry Research Dept./Middle East Affairs Dept., ISA FM 2570/6.

[2] Weitz Diary, entry for 11 June 1948, CZA A246-13, 2415.

[3] Director of IDF Operations/Intelligence to R. Shiloah, FM, 16 June 1948, ISA FM 2426/9.

[4] Morris, *1948 and After*, 173-90.

numbers, with some soldiers reluctant to shoot, or shoot-to-kill, and because the IDF was too thinly spread effectively to prevent such incursions, the orders had to be repeated periodically during the following months, with special emphasis on preventing Arab reaping in the no man's land between the lines.[5]

Still, the infiltrators got through, in large numbers. They reaped fields in Eastern Galilee,[6] resettled in Haifa,[7] and repopulated abandoned or semi-abandoned villages in the Galilee. By December 1948 the situation had become so serious that Weitz urged that Jews be settled quickly in the still-abandoned villages lest they quickly fill up with infiltrees.[8] And by the following May the position (in Israeli eyes) was near catastrophic, as Weitz wrote to Sharett:

> Slowly but surely, abandoned villages are vanishing as they are resettled [by Arabs], partially or completely . . . Many thousands of dunams formerly considered abandoned lands—are now being [cultivated] or claimed by their owners, and it is clear to me that, if the refugee problem is not shortly solved by resettlement [in Arab countries]—the day is not far when it will be solved by itself by the return to the villages of the [lands'] owners . . . The infiltration of refugees through all the borders . . . is . . . a growing phenomenon. Every day . . . they return . . . I fear 'that while you sit and debate the refugee problem at meetings in Lausanne . . . the problem is being solved . . . by itself . . . And one sees no line of action against infiltration by our government. It appears that there is no government, neither military nor civil. The reins have been loosened and the Arab, with his cunning intelligence, has already sensed this and knows how to draw the appropriate conclusion . . . [9]

Weitz was primarily interested in the north and centre of the country. But the situation along the Gaza Strip border was no better. Despite a

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[5] Yigael Yadin, IDF chief of operations, had already issued a blanket order on 13 June 1948 to all IDF brigades to prevent completely Arab reaping in all areas under Israeli control. The order was repeated on 19 June (see Morris, *1948 and After*, 182). See also Yadin to brigades, 18 Aug. 1948, KMA-PA 102-94: 'Further to the previous instructions, I again emphasize that the return and infiltration of Arab refugees to their villages must be prevented by every means.'

[6] D. Ben-Gurion, *Yoman HaMilhama: Milhemet Ha`Atzm'ut, 1948-1949* (Tel Aviv, 1982), ii. 662, entry for 26 Aug. 1948.

[7] 'Details of a Conversation with Archbishop Gregorius Hakim on Saturday 26 June 1948', Y. Salomon, ISA FM 2563/21.

[8] Ben-Gurion, *Yoman HaMilhama*, ii. 885, entry for 18 Dec. 1948; Salad Office, MAM, to Head Office, MAM, 'Weekly Report 1.1.49-7.1.49', 9 Jan. 1949, ISA MAM 302/73; Y. Weitz, *Yomani*, iii. 360, entry for 3 Dec. 1948. At the meeting of the Committee of Directorates of the National Institutions on 3 Dec., Weitz, representing the JNF, angrily argued that Jews were not settling the abandoned sites fast enough and that 'many of the [i.e. left-wing Mapam] ministers were worrying more about [re]settling Arab [refugees] than settling Jews'.

[9] Weitz to Sharett, 27 May 1949, ISA FM 2449/19; Weitz, *Yomani*, iv. 31, entry for 27 May 1949.

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major IDF campaign, in which '148' infiltrators on their way from Gaza to Majdal/Ashkelon had reportedly been killed, infiltration continued—and even increased.[10]

According to Ben-Gurion's Arab affairs advisers, central Galilee was easily penetrable and 'without government', with Arabs from Lebanon coming and going almost as they pleased. IDF positions along the border were designed 'to prevent an invasion, not infiltration'. The Military Government blamed the army; the army, the Military Government. Yehoshu`a Palmon, a senior adviser, supported by IDF Chief of Operations Yigael Yadin, proposed the establishment of an 'irregular Arab (non-Muslim) army to serve as a cordon that will prevent' infiltration. He was apparently referring to the Druse (who within a few years were indeed to become the backbone of Israel's Border Police). Palmon assured Ben-Gurion that they would be 'loyal . . . [And] would be allowed to rob the infiltrators . . . They are expert smugglers [themselves], and know all the trails.' On 20 December 1948 Ben-Gurion appointed Emmanuel Markovsky (Mor) as the Military Government's chief representative in the north with the task of 'preventing Arab infiltration . . .'. And IDF OC Northern Front (later, Command) offered a battalion specifically to combat the infiltration.[11]

From spring 1949 there is evidence of pressure by local authorities, military and civilian, to persuade the government to adopt a hardline policy towards infiltrators, especially harvesters. In April, Moshe Dayan, then military governor of Jerusalem, called for a 'harsh' policy along the border.[12] The Interior Ministry's Jerusalem District Commissioner also lobbied against allowing Arabs to cultivate lands along the border.[13]

Pressure from below quickly proved effective. The drive against infiltration during the following years involved several agencies, including the IDF, police, General Security Service (GSS or Shin Bet), and the settlement institutions, and a wide range of measures. From the start, there was a feeling in the IDF that the problem was insoluble, or, rather, that its solution depended on major political developments: 'The infiltration problem will exist so long as there are Palestinian refugees in the Arab states bordering Israel . . . [and] so long as the problem of [their]

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[10] Berdichevsky to director general, MAM, 20 Feb. 1949, ISA MAM 297/60.

[11] Ben-Gurion, *Yoman HaMilhama*, iii. 883,888-9, 918, entries for 18, 20, 31 Dec. 1948. Markovsky was also charged with 'preventing the Communists from taking control of the [Israeli] Arabs'.

[12] Dayan to General Staff/Operations, 28 Apr. 1949, ISA FM 2431/4 aleph; Dayan to General Staff/Operations, 31 May 1949, ISA FM 2431/4 bet.

[13] Bergman to FM, 25 May 1949, ISA FM 2431/4 bet; Biran (Bergman) to FM, director general, 7 May 1950, ISA FM 2431/7; Biran to foreign minister, 17 May 1950, ISA FM 2431/7.

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resettlement in the neighbouring countries is not resolved', wrote the head of the IDF Operations Department.[14]

Institutional Responses

In part, this pessimism stemmed from the early failures of the 'Border Corps', which, alongside the hiring of the settlement guards (the *muhzakim*), was the defence establishment's major institutional response to infiltration.

Setting up the Border Police

The end of the war found the IDF in disarray and in the throes of a major reorganization. The bulk of the army, 90,000-strong in December 1948, was demobilized, including the crack Palmah brigades. A new system, based on a small standing army of some 30,000 conscripts and professionals, and a large pool of easily mobilized reserves, was instituted. The army's thinking was governed by the need to prepare for a possible Second Round.

But during 1948 a second, minor challenge had already emerged: infiltration. The units deployed in hilltop positions and the patrols along the lines proved incapable of curbing it. The situation worsened with the mass demobilization in 1949; the remaining combat units and officers were trained and geared for war, not for fighting civilian marauders (a task many of the troops found distasteful).

With the infiltration problem growing more acute, the idea of a special border force—designated *Hayl HaSfar* (the Border Corps)—surfaced, although, from the start, many senior officers opposed it, believing that, given the means, the IDF could do a better job.[15] At an early planning session in September 1949, with Ben-Gurion in the chair, the prospective commander of the new force, General David Shaltiel, said he thought it should be independent of the IDF, answer directly to the defence minister, and work in co-operation with the police. Shaltiel, a veteran of the French Foreign Legion, believed it should be composed of career soldiers, serving for twenty or twenty-five years. IDF CGS Ya`akov Dori thought that the

[14] 'On the Infiltration', Lt.-Col. Shimon Avidan to IDF Commands, Israel police, etc., 11 Mar. 1949, IDFA $\frac{2168/51}{31}$).

[15] '[Lt.-Col. Y.] Rabin [OC operations, Southern Command] believes that security will not be established by a border corps or the police but only by the army' (Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 30 Sept. 1949, BGA).

force should be part of the army and proposed that 1,000 men be especially trained.[16]

By January 1950 Shaltiel reported that 600 men, 100 of them Circassians, had been mobilized for the corps. It was still not clear whether the force would be part of the IDF, or the police (as Shaltiel recommended), or be independent.[17] Meanwhile, it functioned within the IDF.

The force was beset by serious teething problems, including lack of adequate manpower and resources and quarrels between the IDF and the police for control. Eventually, it was placed under police control[18] and by March 1951 had some 300-400 men, divided into three companies, which underwent military training.[19] Once trained, the three companies patrolled the borders with Lebanon and Syria, and the border with Jordan from Beit Nabala northwards. But their presence made little difference.

In 1953, with infiltration at an all-time high, an expansion of the force to 1,500 men, with their own bases, was recommended.[20] Effective patrolling by the force—now known as the Border Police (*Mishmar HaGvul*)—*was* still plagued by army-police disputes over jurisdiction.[21] Ben-Gurion ordered the police and IDF General Staff to produce an overall plan

> for the protection of the border against infiltrators, thieves and robbers . . . The existing situation [he told his Cabinet ministers] causes the loss of life of tens of civilians and soldiers each year, losses in property of hundreds of thousands of pounds per year . . . a feeling of insecurity in the border settlements . . . The need for retaliatory strikes harms our relations with our neighbours and provides material for incitement against us by the Arab states and the rest of those who hate us around the world. It could also compromise our relations with the US and England. If it is possible, this must be avoided at all costs.

The joint police-IDF study concluded that the police could be given responsibility for the borders from Beersheba northwards if they had twelve Border Police companies (120 men per company), with the IDF continuing to retain responsibility for guarding the frontiers with Egypt and Jordan south of latitude 70.[22]

The Cabinet approved. The expanded Border Police was formally

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[16] Ben-Gurion Diary, entries for 21 Sept., 14 Nov. 1949, BGA.

[17] Ibid, entry for 6 Jan. 1950, BGA.

[18] Ibid, entries for 27, 30 Jan., 24 Aug. 1950, BGA; Ben-Gurion to Y. Palmon, etc., 28 Aug. 1950, ISA PMO 5433; Tal, 'HaTguvot', 19-21; Ben-Gurion Diary, entries for 22 Sept. 1950, 11 Jan. 1951, BGA.

[19] Ibid., entries for 21 Feb., 28 Mar. 1951, BGA.

[20] Ibid., entry for 5 Mar. 1953, BGA.

[21] 'The Infiltration into Israel in 1952 and the Recent Tension (Dec. 1952-Jan. 1953 along the Borders)', protocol of meeting on 4 Feb. 1953 of IDF and FM intelligence executives, unsigned and undated, statement by Lt.-Col. Avraham Tamir, ISA FM 2402/12. See also Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 24 Jan. 1952, BGA.

[22] Ben-Gurion to members of Cabinet, 24 Mar. 1953, BGA.

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established in July 1953, headed by a senior police officer, Pinhas Koppel. Training was intensified and the new companies were deployed. The force's relative efficiency was among the factors cited by IDF Intelligence Branch for the reduction of infiltration in the last months of 1953.[23]

The success and efficiency of the Border Police led the IDF, on 1 April 1954, to hand over to it responsibility for the Lebanese, Syrian, and Jordanian border as far south as Beit Govrin (though IDF units continued to operate along the central and northern borders in co-ordination with the police).[24]

In the course of the early and mid-1950s the IDF also set up—and almost always quickly disbanded—a number of small special units whose task was to combat infiltration. These shadowy units often operated on the Arab side of the demarcation lines. The most important and lasting of them was the Shaked Reconnaissance Unit (*Sayeret Shaked*), set up in 1955-6 by Southern Command.

Establishing New Settlements

A primary strategic measure partly designed to block infiltration was the establishment of new settlements, of which some 350 were set up between mid-1948 and mid-1953, most of them *moshavim*, many of them along or near the borders.

Initially, in late 1948 and early 1949, the overriding political reason for establishing the settlements was to stake out claims to territory and frontiers before the general armistice agreements were signed. Wherever Israeli settlements were, there would be Israeli territory; wherever Israeli settlement ended, there would be the country's frontiers.

Moreover, the 1948 war had demonstrated the supreme military value of border settlements. The settlements—almost all of them kibbutzim—had proved serious, almost insuperable, obstacles to the invading Arab armies. As the Arab states had not made peace with Israel in the wake of 1948, and a Second Round was widely regarded as inevitable, settlements

[23] '304. Security on the Borders', summary of Cabinet resolution of 29 Mar. 1953, ISA PMO 5433; 'General Summary of the Situation on Israel's Borders in September in Comparison with Previous Months', unsigned (but probably by Israel Police HQ), Sept. 1954, ISA FM 2429/8 aleph; quotation from a report in the *Jerusalem Post* of 27 Dec. 1953, on a speech by Police Minister Bechor Shitrit, PRO FO 371-111077 VR1073/1. Shitrit said that infiltration had 'decreased considerably' in the previous months 'because the Border Police have increased in numbers and efficiency'. But other Israeli spokesmen attributed the decrease in infiltration in the last months of 1953 and in early 1954 mainly to the Qibya raid.

[24] 'On the Responses along the Borders', summary of conversation with A. Chelouche, of Israel Police HQ, by P. Eliav, FM, 5 June 1955, ISA FM 2448/15; 'Report to the Security Council from the Chief of Staff of the [UN] Truce Supervision Organization', 24 Feb. 1954, ISA FM 2425/11. See also Sahar, *Sipur Hayai*, 99-100.

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along the new borders were seen as a vital component of strategic planning: there should be no gaps along the frontiers through which invading Arab armies could pass unchallenged.[25] Israeli strategic thinking also called for the dispersal of the Jewish population away from the tightly packed Coastal Plain, which presented a vulnerable target to Arab air, naval, and artillery forces. Immigrants were sent to outlying new settlements as part of this 'demographic strategy' of dispersal.[26]

In the second half of 1948 and much of 1949, at least up to the September breakdown of the Lausanne Conference, the new settlements were also regarded as a necessary measure in the struggle against a possible Palestinian refugee return. The abandoned but often intact Arab villages lured the refugees. But if the villages were settled and the land cultivated by Jewish settlers, the refugees would have nowhere to return to, and Western and Arab pressures for such a return would diminish. At the same time, the settlement of the sites would stymie infiltration by individual refugees bent on resettlement or cultivating and harvesting abandoned crops. The new settlements thus blocked a Palestinian return on both macro and micro levels.

Lastly, new border settlements would close the infiltrators' access routes into the country. 'It is clear that the very presence of Jewish settlements will reduce the dimensions of the infiltration,' wrote IDF CGS Yadin in spring 1950.[27] He made the same point two years later about a Jewish settlement on or near the site of the abandoned Arab village of Bir'im, in the Upper Galilee: 'We attach very great importance to the existence of a Jewish settlement point in Bar-Am [i.e. Kafr Bir'im]. This settlement makes a great contribution toward the prevention of infiltration along the northern border . . .'[28]

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[25] Ben-Gurion told the Knesset in 1952:

> The settlement of the borders and the empty spaces—is also a security task of the first order . . . . The War of Independence revealed the military value—not only the tactical, but also the strategic, value—of the settlements around Jerusalem, in the South, in the Galilee and in the Jordan Valley. . . . Security. . . commands us swiftly to populate the border areas and the empty spaces. (*Divrei HaKnesset*, 7 (2 Jan. 1952), 656)

[26] See ibid.: 'The concentration of half the Yishuv in the Yarkon District around Tel Aviv constitutes a serious danger to our security. . . [and] existence.'

[27] Y. Yadin to L. Eshkol, 9 May 1950, CZA S-15/4272. Yadin was responding to a complaint by Eshkol that infiltrators roamed freely in the Beit Jibrin-Beit Govrin area and that the army seemed powerless to stop them. Four years later Eshkol told the Jewish Agency Executive that 'the gap near Beit Jibrin-Hebron [still] needs to be plugged'—which was what the Lachish regional settlement project was designed to do (Eshkol at meeting of Jewish Agency Executive, 27 Dec. 1954, CZA S100-96).

[28] Yadin to defence minister, 22 May 1952, IDFA (no file number given). I was shown a censored version of the letter. It is probable that the letter was written in the course of one of the multi-departmental debates concerning the possible return of the dispossessed villagers to Bir'im. Yadin opposed a return.

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Civilian officials shared Yadin's view. The head of the Negev Development Project in June 1950 wrote that the establishment of the settlement of Mivtahim would 'without doubt . . . increase security in this area'.[29] Settlements reduced the need for troops or police at every potential border-crossing point. Where there were no or few settlements (as, until 1955-6, in the Beit Jibrin-Lachish area), the army had to invest heavily in camps, outposts, patrols, and ambushes.[30]

If, in the late 1940s, strategic and political calculations predominated in deciding on the establishment and location of new settlements, by the mid-1950s, if not earlier, the infiltration problem appears to have become a major consideration (alongside demographics, strategy, housing, and agricultural development). The establishment of the twenty-seven Lachish Zone settlements (in 1955-6) provides a good illustration. This chain of settlements was largely established, according to its chief planner, Ra`anan Weitz, to 'seal the borders and stymie infiltration' into and across the 'waist' between the Gaza Strip and the Hebron Hills. Subsequently, further settlement chains were set up in the northern Negev—again, primarily with the aim of 'sealing our borders and blocking infiltration . . .'[31]

Infiltration also affected the views of settlement planners on the best shape and size to be adopted. In general, they preferred—and built—relatively small, round 'concentrated' *moshavim*, with little space between the houses, to reduce the area to be fenced, lit, and guarded.[32]

But the establishment of chains of border settlements, and the filling of the empty spaces in the interior, failed to halt infiltration. Perhaps certain access routes were blocked. But the new settlements themselves offered the enterprising (and hungry) marauder a host of new targets.

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[29] 'Report on the Activities of Mif`al HaNegev for May 1950', M. Cahanovich, 15 June 1950, CZA S-15/8770.

[30] But it is also true to say that the establishment of the new border settlements also presented infiltrators with new and attractive targets, and the IDF and police with new objectives to guard. Moreover, instead of having to infiltrate deep into the country to steal a cow or irrigation equipment, the infiltrators were able to steal from the new settlements close to the border. Thus settlements intended, in part, to frustrate infiltration themselves 'encouraged' it and, moreover, had to be guarded against the infiltrators.

[31] R. Weitz, *HaKfar HaYisraeli Be`Idan HaTechnologiya* (Tel Aviv, 1967), 91-2. The chapter on the Lachish settlements, from which the quotes are taken, was originally published in Oct. 1956. See also Eshkol at meeting of Jewish Agency Executive, 27 Dec. 1954, CZA S100-96.

[32] Cahanovich to the Settlement Dept., Jewish Agency, 25 Sept. 1950, CZA S-15/8770; A. Yelin to Major Matrikin, 'The Influence of Infiltration on Planning [Settlements]', 9 July 1951, CZA S-15/8819; Weitz, *HaKfar HaYisraeli Be`Idan HaTechnologiya*, 123. Yelin argued that, while the settlement's houses should be 'concentrated', the larger and more populous the settlement, the easier it was to defend against infiltrators.

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Shooting To Kill

The IDF had already instituted a broad range of measures to combat infiltration, including patrols and ambushes (on both sides of the line), and mine fields, during the 1948 war. The front lines effectively became free fire zones and troops were usually ordered to shoot to kill.

During the second half of 1948 and the first months of 1949, before the signing of the Israel-Arab armistice agreements, Israeli troops had standing orders to fire at any Arabs between their positions or near the front lines, whether during combat or truce periods. Infiltrators—most of them harvesters or scavengers—were killed and wounded in their dozens along the lines. Many of the incidents occurred in or near no man's land, whose exact configuration was often in dispute. Israeli troops adopted a 'better-safe-than-sorry' approach, for infiltrating Arab cultivators and shepherds might be spies or saboteurs. The IDF also wanted to stake Israel's territorial claim as far east as possible on the Jordanian front and as far west and south as possible on the Egyptian front; keeping Arabs out was essential in asserting sovereignty. UN observers' reports furnish a stream of descriptions of IDF machine-gunners and snipers killing and wounding (and, occasionally, detaining) Arab harvesters and scavengers (and pack animals) along the truce lines during late 1948 and early 1949.[33]

Although the instances are far fewer than those of IDF shootings, there were occasional, fatal shootings of Israelis across the border with Jordan by trigger-happy Arab Legionnaires, Iraqi troops (stationed in Samaria until summer 1949), and Egyptian troops (stationed in the Hebron foothills until February-March 1949).[34] But cases of Arab troops firing across no man's land at Israeli civilians were extremely rare. The Arab troops feared to antagonize Israel and provoke Israeli retaliation at a time when the Israelis were understood to be much stronger. Also, Israeli farmers, more disciplined (and better fed) than their Arab counterparts and Palestinian refugees rarely cultivated fields within shooting distance of Arab positions. Moreover, by the end of 1948 Israeli military successes had in most parts of the

[33] Delaval to Col. T. Bonde, 21 June 1948, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-1; 'Report of Incident', 21 Dec. 1948, by UN observer Lt.-Com. J. E. Calhoun (USN), UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-24; 'Enquête sur la plainte ou rapport sur l'incident', 21 Dec. 1948, by Calhoun, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-18; 'Investigation of Complaint or Report of Incident', UN observers Maj. Lamoine and Capt. Bossuyt, 19 Oct. 1948, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-25; 'Investigation of Complaint or Report of Incident', 11 Feb. 1949, by Capt. Swift (US army) and Capt. Serre (French army), UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-25 (the observers' view was that Khirbet al Mujadda`a was 'on the Truce line' (i.e. no man's land); that neither Arab civilians nor Jewish troops had the right to be there; and that the Arabs did not know 'the true line location'); Bethlehem Area Complaint, 9 Apr. 1949 by the Mukhtar of A1 Burj to Capt. Phelep, UN observer, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-18.

[34] See, e.g., 'Investigation of Complaint', 27 Oct. 1948, UN observer Comdt. Durre (Belgian army), UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-24, on the wounding of two Israeli soldiers near Talpiyot in southern Jerusalem.

country pushed the frontiers well into Arab-owned land so that Jewish farmers and settlements, at least initially, did not own or lease fields adjacent to the front lines.

The IDF policy of shooting at infiltrators along and near the front lines, initially adopted in June 1948, remained in force along all the borders after the signing of the armistice accords in 1949. The fact that the agreements, which fell far short of peace treaties, had converted a wartime truce into *de facto* non-belligerency did nothing to diminish Israel's resolve to preserve every inch of its territory from trespass. If anything, this resolve seems to have been reinforced, in so far as Israel had at last achieved recognized, if not everywhere clearly defined, frontiers which needed to be reaffirmed on a day-to-day basis. If Arab shepherds or farmers were given an inch, they would in short order take a mile, and much of the frontier—large sections of which were bereft of Israeli settlements—would be rolled back and restored to *de facto* Arab possession. As an American observer explained in 1952, Israel was 'well aware' of the hardship suffered by many dispossessed West Bank farmers 'but prefers killing Arabs harvesting no man's land rather than give up any legal rights to her claim [to] full sovereignty [over] land in question in any future settlement'.[35]

Existing Israeli border settlements were asked, and readily agreed, to cultivate lands right up to the border so that as little no man's land as possible remained between Israel and the Arabs.[36] The feeling among border kibbutzniks was that 'we determine the border. To the extent that we retreat, they [i.e. the infiltrators] will push forward in our direction. And if we advance, they perforce will retreat.'[37] The post-1948 struggle against the infiltrators was seen by many settlers as merely another phase in the struggle for the land of Palestine. In effect, the infiltrators were trying to grab or reclaim chunks of land where the Arab armies had failed. Harsh means were therefore justified in repelling them.

The Israelis—politicians, soldiers, and farmers—were acutely aware of just how small a country they had succeeded in establishing, and how little space was in fact available for the hundreds of thousands, and perhaps millions, of Jews who were expected to pour into the country. Every dunam of land was regarded as precious, rendered doubly so by the blood of the thousands spilled to hold and conquer it. No doubt a further, intangible but potent historical factor was also at play. For thousands of years the Jews in their countries of exile had by and large been barred from owning

[35] S. R. Tyler jun. (Jerusalem) to State Dept., 29 May 1952, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan 1952.

[36] Dayan, *Avnei*, 102.

[37] *Alon Kibbutz Erez* (Kibbutz Erez Bulletin), article by M. Naveh, kibbutz secretary, 18 Apr. 1950, Kibbutz Erez Archive.

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land; in 1948, at last, they had acquired some of this precious, vital commodity—and they were not about to give any of it up. (This factor was probably pertinent both in the struggle to fend off infiltration and in staving off Western pressures to make territorial concessions in exchange for a peace settlement.)

In private conversations and internal correspondence, Israeli officers made no bones about the policy of shooting infiltrators, armed or unarmed, bent on harvesting, grazing, resettlement, or sabotage. On 4 June 1949, OC Southern Command General Yigal Allon said that he had declared an eight-kilometre-deep strip along the Israeli side of both the Israeli-Jordanian and Israeli-Egyptian borders 'military area[s]: every stranger found in [them] will be shot, without interrogation'. (He claimed that this had reduced infiltration.)[38] A month later, on 3 July 1949, Dayan, OC Jerusalem District, wrote that 'our army has an order to shoot at anyone trying to cross the [Israeli-Jordanian] border to our side and at everyone found in "the security zone" (several kilometres deep along the border) who is not in possession of a special pass'. Dayan felt that the Jordanians had no right to 'interfere' with 'our tough [*keshiha*] behaviour towards infiltrators'.[39] The following month, Dayan's assistant on the IJMAC declared: 'I did not commit myself that we would arrest rather than shoot trespassers. In previous instances, I informed the Legion representative that anyone crossing the border was endangering his life.'[40] Or, as the American military attaché in Tel Aviv put it, simply: the 'Israel defense policy is shoot to kill all Arabs violating frontiers'.[41]

The policy was implemented with various degrees of consistency and resolution by different units in different sectors at different times in 1949 and the early 1950s. Some commanders were reluctant to order troops to

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[38] Weitz, *Yomani*, iv. 33, entry for 4 June 1949

[39] Dayan to foreign minister, 3 July 1949, ISA FM 2431/5.

[40] A. Friedlander to Dayan, 21 Aug. 1949, ISA FM 2431/6.

[41] Military attaché (Tel Aviv) to Army Dept., 15 Jan. 1950, NA RG 59, State Dept. Records, LM 59, Palestine and Israel, Internal Affairs, Roll 3. The IDF is apparently embarrassed by its 'shoot-to-kill, no-questions-asked' policy of 1949 and the early 1950s. IDFA refuses to make the relevant documentation available to researchers. But traces of this policy are apparent even in the censored documents that IDFA officials did let me see. The excisions are telling. 'Operation Order No. 70', Capt. Y. Zacharevich, operations officer, Coastal Plain District, to Southern Front [Command]/Operations, etc., 29 May 1949, IDFA $\frac{2317/52}{38}$: 'Arabs from across the border must on no account be permitted. . . to cultivate land, reap and so on, not in our territory and not in no man's land. In order to prevent such activity you must, if needs be, open fire. [Several sentences blacked out here.]'

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shoot unarmed infiltrators; others refused to order troops to fire at women and children. In some areas, troops circumvented the orders by, for example, firing above infiltrators' heads. Some units captured infiltrators, gave them a sound thrashing, and sent them back across the border. Much was apparently left to the discretion of local commanders. Moreover, the policy was sporadically amended or suspended in response to Arab and Western criticism. In December 1949, IDF General Staff/Operations, prompted by the killing of some captured infiltrators, sent a circular to all brigades:

> (*A*) On no account should Arabs arrested on suspicion of infiltration or infiltrators be shot. (*B*) Permission to open fire is given only in cases when the enemy opens fire. . . . IDF units should open fire, without preliminary warning, only in the context of combat activities . . . at night [i.e. ambushes] or in the event of the enemy running away.

Needless to say, the last provision gave troops a great deal of leeway.[42]

In late February 1950 an amended version of this order was issued, explicitly forbidding the execution of captured infiltrators. It further elaborated on the instructions for opening fire:

> Permission to open fire is given only in the following cases: (1) Opening of fire by the enemy . . . . (2) Combat activities of IDF units . . . . (3) The enemy running away—[the IDF unit should then] fire a warning shot in the air, and fire on [the suspect], in order to hit him, in the event that the [suspect] continues to run away. . . . (4) On no account should women and children be fired on.[43]

The General Staff guidelines were routed down the chains of command and appear sporadically, sometimes in slightly amended form, on the brigade and battalion levels. For example, on 10 August 1949, the headquarters of the 21st Battalion, Carmeli Brigade, issued the following 'standing orders' in 'the battle against infiltration':

> (1) Every infiltrator entering or on the country's border will be arrested.
>
> (2) In the event that the infiltrators refuse to halt, attempt to flee or resist—[the unit] must open fire in order to kill.
>
> (3) In the event of infiltration by shepherds with their flocks into our territory—the shepherds and the flocks must be detained.

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[42] General Staff/Operations to brigades, 'Killing Infiltrators', 13 Dec. 1949, IDFA $\frac{701/54}{261}$. The draft reads: Following a not inconsiderable number of incidents in which Arabs were harmed within the context of actions to curb infiltration, and imbroglios in the MACs resulted, you are ordered to follow the following guidelines scrupulously.' The guidelines are the same as in the final version, except that they include an explicit prohibition: 'On no account should women and children be fired upon.'

[43] General Staff/Operations to OC General Staff Branch etc., 28 Feb. 1950, IDFA $\frac{2539/50}{14}$.

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(4) Any person moving at night in the border area, in which there is a night curfew, and in the northern security area [i.e. to a depth of some 10 kilometres from the border] who refuses to stop. . . must be fired upon.[44]

But the General Staff's instructions were apparently not being carried out properly or universally. In March 1950 Major Yitzhak Hofi, Southern Command's head of operations, thought it necessary to issue an order that previous instructions about the treatment of infiltrators should be adhered to and that orders to the contrary should not be issued, 'as [done recently] by the Coastal Plain District'.[45]

In the course of 1949-56, the small print of the shoot-to-kill policy changed from sector to sector and month to month, depending on the state of tension, the frequency of terrorist (as distinct from economic) infiltration, topographical considerations, the character of sector commanders, the attitude and behaviour of the Arab regular units facing the IDF patrols or positions, the presence and attitudes of UN observers, Israel's international diplomatic standing, and so on.

Israelis were often not frank about the IDF's free-fire policy towards infiltrators, which perhaps testifies to a certain moral discomfort.[46] The policy frequently resulted in the death of harmless farmers or shepherds. A measure of disingenuousness was thus called for. A government press release in mid-1950 explained: 'In the early months [after the signing of the armistice agreements], Israel's measures to prevent infiltration and marauding were mild. [But] this served merely to encourage and intensify the scale of infiltration.' The circular went on to say that, during the previous weeks, there had been considerable cross-border harvesting by Arabs in the Hebron foothills. Three times IDF troops had ordered the

[44] 21st Battalion/Carmeli Brigade, to companies A, B, C, and support, 10 Aug. 1949, IDFA $\frac{2713/53}{50}$. Two points should be made. First, these orders gave local commanders a great deal of discretion; secondly, one may assume that many infiltrators, when challenged, preferred to try to run for it rather than fall into IDF hands. Many infiltrators no doubt had heard stories about the rough treatment meted out by the IDF to other infiltrators and did not know in advance whether, after falling into IDF hands, they would be summarily shot, beaten, jailed, expelled across the border, or released.

[45] Hofi to 7th Brigade and districts, 15 Mar. 1950, IDFA $\frac{2539/50}{14}$. A full, accurate tracing of the free-fire policy and its implementation in various districts at different times must await the complete, uncensored opening of the relevant IDFA records.

[46] When opposition (Herut) MK A. Altman in Nov. 1951 complained in parliament about the government's seeming inability to curb the infiltrators (he charged, with some exaggeration, that infiltrators on average murdered 'seven' Israelis a month), Ben-Gurion responded that such matters were best discussed in the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, whose proceedings were secret. But Ben-Gurion added that Altman had not bothered to mention Israel's counter-infiltration operations, and said: 'I do not intend to give numbers here.' Perhaps Ben-Gurion, who knew how many infiltrators were being killed each month, felt some embarrassment, or perhaps he thought it prudent not to publicize such figures, which could have been used for propaganda purposes by Israel's critics (*Divrei HaKnesset*, 10/1 (28 Nov. 1951), 501-2).

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harvesters to leave. Only afterwards, shots had been fired 'into the air. . . The Arabs thereupon departed.' But they came back a few days later and three were shot dead.[47]

Repeatedly during 1949 and the early 1950s Jordanian (and Egyptian) officials complained about the IDF's free-fire policy, arguing that it was inhuman and counter-productive. In 1953 `Azmi Nashashibi, Jordan's chief delegate to the IJMAC, argued at a meeting with IDF officers that

> attacks on innocent children, women, and old people result in hatred and blood feuds. . . Along the borders are encamped people to whom an armistice agreement and a map are unintelligible. Their property was stolen. The crowded conditions in which they live and hunger cause them to take the few steps towards the border and to snatch a few oranges. [In response,] Israel murders them.
>
> [An IDF officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Haim Gaon, answered]: The infiltration is mainly carried out by armed bands . . . To emphasize infiltration geared to stealing oranges would be a crude distortion of the facts. [Nashashibi conceded]: There are groups of criminals who cross the border to smuggle or spy. These he [i.e. Nashashibi] asked Israel to kill. [But] it is inappropriate to call peaceful civilians 'armed robbers', and to act against them with complete brutality.[48]

At the end of February 1950, Jordan's MAC representative lodged a complaint after IDF troops had shot dead two infiltrators. 'He asked [that] infiltrators should not be killed but simply taken prisoner as is customary in all the world.' Israel's chief MAC delegate, Major Shaul Ramati, responded that Israel took

> the strongest disciplinary measures against soldiers who were suspected of *killing prisoners*. [Jordan], however, should make sure that infiltrees when challenged by an Israeli patrol should stop and surrender immediately and not start running away or opening fire on the patrol. In such cases . . . the patrol would have no option but to fire on the infiltrees.[49]

But it was not really or always a case of infiltrators 'running away or opening fire' on Israeli patrols. When Walter Eytan, director general of the Foreign Ministry, complained about the diplomatic fall-out from these killings, Ben-Gurion's advisor on Arab affairs, Palmon, responded:

> [We] cannot countenance the return to Israel of Arabs by way of infiltration. . . If there are Arabs who choose to cross the armistice border without permission . . . and at night, then they run risks. . . [and] some of the [infiltrators] infiltrate

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[47] 'Press Release No. 1', Information Services of the State of Israel, Foreign Press Division, 9 June 1950, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 2. It is possible that the civilian officials who wrote such press releases were not aware of the realities along the borders.

[48] Gaon, IDF General Staff officer for the MACs, to IDF Intelligence Dept., etc., 12 Mar. 1953, ISA FM 2949/18.

[49] S. Ramati to Sherut Modi'in 9 (IDF Intelligence Dept., Section 9), *c*.28 Feb. 1950, ISA FM 2431/7 (emphasis added).

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to rob and murder. . . I don't think that the border guards can be given orders to behave more gently.[50]

In September 1950 Lebanon complained that Israeli sentries had fired on four Palestinian children picking dates inside Israel. One child had been killed and two wounded. In a departure from the rule, Israel informed the United Nations that the soldier responsible would be court-martialled.[51]

By the early 1950s the Jordanians stopped complaining about IDF killing of infiltrators inside Israel (perhaps they realized that it was pointless), and restricted their complaints to cases in which Israelis killed Arab farmers and shepherds inside Jordan or in no man's land.[52] With the border not clearly marked, it was not always obvious in whose territory a given cultivator or shepherd had been shot, and, since IDF troops were often trigger-happy (and partially covered by free-fire orders), there were numerous cases of Israeli soldiers shooting Arabs inside Arab territory or in no man's land. To parry Jordanian complaints, Israel sometimes resorted to deceit. A letter by Dayan in mid-1949 indicates the kind of ploys used. He demanded 'greater efficiency' from the troops and explained: 'Infiltrators whom we killed near the border must be buried in our territory [before UN observers arrive], or be carried [from Arab territory or no man's land back to Israeli territory], so that they won't be able to argue that we killed Arabs in Arab territory.'[53]

Apparently, a substantial number of the 'infiltrators' shot at this time were indeed hit in no man's land or on the Arab side of the border rather than in Israel. For example, according to the British Legation in Amman (basing itself on Legion statistics), Israeli troops shot dead twenty-six Arab infiltrators inside Israeli territory, eleven in no man's land, and twenty-three on the Jordanian side of the border during the period February-July 1950.[54]

IDF night-time patrols and ambushes, usually set up on known infiltration routes, had orders to shoot to kill without warning. Many if not most infiltrations took place at night. Initially, the hundreds of ambushes set each month[55] were relatively successful. For example, of fifty-seven

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[50] Palmon to Eytan, 19 Dec. 1949, ISA FM 2402/19.

[51] W. Riley to A. Cordier, 4 Oct. 1950, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-27. I have been unable to determine whether the soldier was indeed court-martialled.

[52] A. S.C. Fuller (Jerusalem) to State Dept., 6 June 1952, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[53] Dayan to IDF CGS, etc., 3 July 1949, ISA FM 2431/5.

[54] British Legation to Eastern Dept. FO, 19 Aug. 1950, PRO FO 371-82206 EE1091/104. But, while indicative, these Jordanian-British figures are problematic. Whereas the Legion probably had accurate figures on Arabs killed in Jordan and, perhaps, also in no man's land, it was far from authoritative about figures for Arabs killed in Israel, for which Jordan had to rely mainly on Israeli officials.

[55] In 1951 the IDF set some 400 ambushes a month; in 1952, some 650 (see 'Infiltration in 1952 (Summary for the Months Jan.-Nov. 1952)', IDF Intelligence Dept., undated (but probably from Dec. 1952), ISA FM 2428/4 aleph).

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nightly ambushes set by Southern Command in June 1949 along the Gaza Strip and southern Jordanian borders, twenty-three produced 'results'. In July, twenty-four of the more than fifty ambushes set produced 'results'. These 'results' included the killing of infiltrators and their donkeys and camels.[56]

Within months, the infiltrators began to take countermeasures, sending scouts ahead of the main party and arming themselves. By 1952-3 few ambushes managed to make contact with infiltrators.[57] Occasionally, an IDF Command would decide on a concentrated campaign, setting a large number of ambushes along a narrow front for several nights. A favourite site was Wadi Hasi, just north of the Gaza Strip. The 11th Brigade set a string of ambushes along this dry river bed between 19 and 27 February 1950, killing, in all, eleven infiltrators.[58] Three months before, an ambush set by Southern Command at the same site had killed eight infiltrators after letting pass two women who had been sent ahead as scouts.[59] But, generally, the ambushes—thin on the ground because of manpower shortages—failed to make contact or stop the infiltration. However, they took a steady toll of Arab lives and were kept up until the Sinai-Suez War in 1956.

Mining and Booby-Trapping

Since the army and police could not halt the phenomenon, the veteran border settlements—almost all of them kibbutzim, with long traditions of self-defence—beefed up their own defences. The feeling was that 'the. . . burden of the battle against the infiltrators. . . is falling on the settlements [rather than the security forces]'.[60] The kibbutzim added fortifications and

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[56] 'Summary of Infiltration for the Month of June 1949', Southern Front, undated, and 'Summary of Infiltration for the Month of July 1949', Southern Front, undated, both in IDFA$^{2539/50}_{14}$).

[57] 'Infiltration into Israel in 1952 and the Recent Tension (Dec. 1952-Jan. 1953) along the Borders', ISA FM 2402/12: 'the results of the many ambushes are almost nil [*afsi'im*]'. In 1952 the IDF sent out 10,089 patrols and ambushes *in toto*, according to Tamir.

[58] Capt. Y. Zacherevitch, operations officer, 11th Brigade, to Southern Command HQ/Operations, 3 Mar. 1950, IDFA$^{2539/50}_{14}$.

[59] Zacherevitch, operations officer, Coast District, to Southern Command HQ/Operations, 9 Dec. 1949, IDFA$^{2539/50}_{14}$.

[60] D. Freund, head of the Kibbutz Artzi Security Committee, to 'Fischel', 25 Aug. 1949, HHA 18.6 (2 bet).

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bunkers, perimeter lighting and barbed wire fences, and instituted light-weapons training.[61]

At the end of 1949, with the army increasingly aware of its shortcomings in the struggle against infiltration, the senior command began to look to the kibbutzim for help, hiring squads of *muhzakim* to supplement its own efforts. At the beginning of 1950 about a dozen *muhzakim* were hired in each of the kibbutzim along the northern edge of the Gaza Strip, a major area of infiltration.[62] Apart from paying the guards' salaries (sometimes in the form of canned food for the kibbutz kitchen), the IDF provided light weapons, mines, and explosives.

During the second half of 1949 the IDF and the *ma"azim* (settlement security officers) began to use mines and explosives in the struggle against the infiltrators.[63] Settlement fences, cultivated fields and groves, the vicinity of water pumps and wells, and likely infiltrator access routes were all mined. Trip wires and 'jumping' fragmentation mines were frequently used. Irrigation pipes and water pumps were frequently booby-trapped. Kibbutz Zikim, near Wadi Hasi (Nahal Shikma), became so expert in such booby-trapping that it soon became known in kibbutz circles as the 'Zikim method' (*shitat Zikim*).[64] Zikim's *ma"az*, Arye Goldstein, was frequently called upon to advise other kibbutzim plagued by infiltrators about mining and booby-trapping methods.[65]

During 1949 and the early 1950s, these mines killed dozens of infiltrators each year. Seriously wounded infiltrators were often shot dead, according to Yitzhak ('Icho') Reis, who was in charge of security along the border just north of the Gaza Strip, when IDF, police, or kibbutz security men came to examine the site of mine explosions the following morning, or were left untreated in the field. Local commanders and security officers killed the captured infiltrators to avoid the costs and problems of hospitalization, incarceration, and interrogation. The dead were occasionally returned to the Egyptians, via the EIMAC. Lightly wounded (or uninjured)

[61] 'Circular No. 146', Actions Committee of the Kibbutz Artzi, to the kibbutzim, 27 Dec. 1949, HHA 18.11 (2). See also 'Information Sheet No. 4', Security Dept., Kibbutz Artzi, 7 Mar. 1951, HHA 18.11 (3).

[62] For the arrangement between the IDF and Erez, see *Alon Kibbutz Erez*, 21 Mar. 1950.

[63] Freund had already advised Kibbutz Zikim in July to send two members to an IDF sappers course, to learn the use of mines and explosives (Freund to Kibbutz Zikim Secretariat, 28 July 1949, Kibbutz Zikim Archive).

[64] But Zikim was not consistently successful. On the night of 5 Mar. 1953 infiltrators managed to cross its minefields, enter the banana grove, and make away with some 14 tons of fruit ('Circular No. 9', Security Dept., Kibbutz Artzi HaShomer HaTza'ir, 15 Apr. 1953, HHA 18.11(5)).

[65] y. Pfefferman, Kibbutz Artzi Security Committee, to Kibbutz Zikim Secretariat, 28 May 1951, Zikim Archive; and 'Information Sheet No. 7', Security Dept., Kibbutz Artzi HaShomer HaTza'ir, 1 Aug. 1951, HHA 18.11 (3). Goldstein, an immigrant from Romania, was killed by one of his own mines, which he apparently mishandled, on 24 June 1953 ('Arye', a commemorative brochure in the Zikim Archive).

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captured infiltrators—who, according to Reis, were 'rare'—were usually handed over to the Ashkelon police, but these preferred not to deal with such captives. Very few of these infiltrators came armed.[66]

Infiltration fell off temporarily after particular mining or booby-trapping successes. But—as with IDF ambushes—the infiltrators quickly learnt to adapt, occasionally defusing mines, at other times neutralizing and replanting them elsewhere. Sometimes, infiltrators even booby-trapped the Israeli mines. Occasionally, infiltrators sent ahead dogs to trip wires and detonate mines. When the kibbutz security men raised the trip wire so that dogs could pass under, the infiltrators began sending mules instead.[67] But these cat-and-mouse games were probably the exception rather than the rule, and throughout the early 1950s many infiltrators continued to hit trip wires, step on mines, and die.

The success of the minings in one small area can be deduced from notations in the office diary of the secretary of Kibbutz Erez on the Gaza border during the first half of 1950.8 January 1950: 'Five Arabs killed by shrapnel mine laid by Aharonik [a kibbutz member].' Three months later, on 8 April, he noted: 'Successful ambush: two Arabs killed.' And on 10 April: 'An Arab and donkeys killed by a mine.' And on 11 April: 'An Arab killed by a mine.' And on 13 April: 'An Arab killed by a mine.' Two months later, on 12 June, he noted: 'Two Arabs killed by a mine.' And on 14 June: 'An Arab killed by a mine.'[68]

In 1951 kibbutz documents record the following events. On 30 March 1951 a group of fifty or sixty infiltrators crossed the border and began picking lemons and oranges from Kibbutz Zikim's (once Arab-owned) groves. One entered a neighbouring banana plantation, stepped on a mine, and died. The kibbutz guards started firing and the infiltrators fled towards the Strip. Perhaps ten were wounded. The kibbutzniks buried the dead Arab and set another mine in place of the one detonated. Next day, infiltrators returned to the site, 'apparently to recover the body. The three of them stepped on mines and died.'[69] A few months later, on 5 July, several infiltrators were injured by mines as they were trying to steal

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[66] Interview with Yitzhak ('Icho') Reis, Yad Mordechai, 14 Oct. 1991. During the interview, Reis explained that the kibbutzniks had felt 'bitterness' towards the infiltrators for the Jewish losses incurred during the 1948 war. The kibbutzniks also felt that, if the infiltrators were not dealt with 'firmly', the kibbutzim would suffer grievous financial losses and 'would be unable to hold out'. But, looking back from the perspective of 1991, Reis said that he did not 'now believe that these actions were completely justified'. Different security men and different kibbutzim related differently to captured infiltrators—some harshly, others humanely.

[67] Yad Mordechai Secretariat to Hof Ashkelon Regional Council, 8 Jan. 1953, Yad Mordechai Archive 11 (Security), corres. 1948-60; interview with Yitzhak Reis, Yad Mordechai, 14 Oct. 1991.

[68] Office diary of Secretary for 1950, Kibbutz Erez Archive.

[69] 'Information Sheet No. 5', Security Dept., Kibbutz Artzi, 15 Apr. 1951, HHA 18.11 (3).

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Zikim's bee-hives. Five days later, on the night of 9/10 July, six infiltrators were killed by a mine as they tried to steal grapes from the kibbutz vineyard.[70] IDF intelligence commended the kibbutz minings as effective and recommended more,[71] and without doubt the minings helped reduce infiltration. At one point, the Zikim area commander reported that infiltration around the kibbutz had been completely halted as a result of the mines.[72]

The border settlers often booby-trapped agricultural water pumps and taps.[73] For example, in early 1953 Yad Mordechai's security men attached a 50-kilogram TNT booby-trap to a water pump and well after small sections of pipeline leading to the pump had been stolen by infiltrators in a succession of raids. When infiltrators reached the pump and tried to haul it away on 10 March, the device exploded, killing 12-15 of them and a number of camels.[74]

During 1948 some kibbutz members developed guilty consciences about the Palestinian refugees. The killing of the infiltrators during 1949 and the early 1950s only increased their moral unease. Some shared the ambivalent attitude expressed in a Mapam circular of mid-1949 that referred to the infiltrators as '*safek miskenim, safek mesukanim*' (perhaps pathetic creatures, perhaps dangerous).[75] The kibbutzniks understood that the 'tens of thousands of refugees living in poverty, hunger and dispossession' were 'being driven by circumstances to live off theft'. But they also believed that, while the infiltrators had probably been relatively benign at the outset, they were now coming to pose a threat to the personal safety and possessions of the kibbutz communities. Theft-oriented infiltration, they thought (or at least argued), was providing the cover for 'dozens of saboteurs and spies who endanger the existence of the state and our existence within it'.[76]

Occasionally, the minings by the *kibbutzim* were suspended in particular localities after Jews had accidentally been injured or killed. One youngster was injured by a mine near Zikim in July 1949;[77] in winter 1950 two

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[70] 'Information Sheet No. 7', Security Dept., Kibbutz Artzi, 1 Aug. 1951, HHA 18.11 (3).

[71] 'The Activity on the Borders: Summaries and Conclusions for the Month of Jan. 1952', IDF General Staff/Intelligence Department, 19 Feb. 1952, ISA FM 2428/7.

[72] 'Report on the Activities of the [Kibbutz] Committees', probably from Feb. 1951, Kibbutz Zikim Archive.

[73] 'Circular No. 9', Security Dept., Kibbutz Artzi HaShomer HaTza'ir, 15 Apr. 1953, HHA 18.11 (5).

[74] 'Summary of Mining and Sabotage Incidents in the South during the Period between 11.2.53 and 28.3.53', ISA FM 2592/18; Interview with Yitzhak Reis, Yad Mordechai, 14 Oct. 1991.

[75] Report of the Security Dept., Kibbutz Artzi, 22 June 1949, HHA 18.6 (1).

[76] *Alon Yad Mordechai*, Munio Brandwein, kibbutz secretary, 3 July 1953, Yad Mordechai Archive.

[77] S. Sverdlov to Kibbutz Zikim, 31 July 1949, Kibbutz Zikim Archive.

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policemen were badly injured near Yad Mordechai.[78] Often, the injured were Jewish thieves from poor *moshavim* or development towns who came in search of food. One Israeli was killed by a mine while trying to steal oranges near Yad Mordechai. In October 1952 Yad Mordechai guards apprehended nine members of a neighbouring *moshav* stealing from the kibbutz vineyards. They had come with carts and donkeys—and 'this was not the first time', the kibbutz wrote to the *rnoshav* secretariat. The kibbutz demanded I£100 in damages, mentioning that it had so far desisted from going to the police.[79]

Infiltrator Casualties

Israel's defensive anti-infiltration measures resulted in the death of several thousand mostly unarmed Arabs during 1949-56, the vast majority between 1949 and 1952. There are no comprehensive statistics, but the available documentation and partial statistics provide a clear indication of the extent of fatalities.

In late February 1949 a senior Israeli official reported that, in a recent IDF interdiction campaign (presumably earlier that month) against Arabs infiltrating from the Gaza Strip to Majdal/Ashkelon, troops had killed '148'.[80] In June 1949 IDF ambushes and mines along the borders with the Gaza Strip and southern Jordan resulted in the death of 93 infiltrators; 2 more were wounded. Ninety-six animals (mostly donkeys and camels) were killed, and 33 infiltrators were captured. (By way of comparison, that month infiltrators in the same area killed 2 Israelis and stole 11 animals.) The following month, July, Southern Front ambushes and mines killed 59 infiltrators and injured another 26; over 100 animals were killed and 42 infiltrators were taken captive. (Southern Front reported no Israelis killed by infiltrators that month.)[81] Infiltrator casualties in northern and central

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[78] *Alon Yad Mordechai*, 16 Nov. 1950, Yad Mordechai Archive.

[79] Yad Mordechai Secretariat to Moshav Al-Jiya Secretriat, 28 Oct. 1952, Yad Mordechai Archive 11 (Security), correspondence 1948-60. The problem around Yad Mordechai, as in other sites along the Israeli-Egyptian, Israeli-Jordanian, and Israeli-Syrian borders, was compounded by the presence of stray, unmarked mines from the 1948 war. In early 1953, for example, a youth named Shimon Cohen stepped on one such mine and was injured near Yad Mordechai (? to Kupat Holim, Yehuda District, Rehovot, 19/3/52, and Yad Mordechai to Majdal/Ashkelon Police, 15 Apr. 1952, both in Yad Mordechai Archive 11 (Security), correspondence 1948-60).

[80] Y. Berdichevsky, MAM's Southern District representative, to director general, MAM, 20 Feb. 1949, ISA MAM 297/60.

[81] 'Summary of Infiltration for the Month of June 1949', Southern Front, undated, and 'Summary of Infiltration for the Month of July 1949', Southern Front, undated, both in IDFA $\frac{1286/51}{41}$. The unusual dead-to-wounded ratio is revealing about IDF treatment of captured wounded infiltrators at this time.

commands together at this time may have equalled those in Southern command. Hence, it is likely that, in June and July 1949, no less than 200-250 infiltrators in all were killed along Israel's borders. June and July were not representative of monthly trends, as these were harvest months. But, along with other available figures, they do offer an indication of infiltrator casualties during the rest of the year. It is probable that, over the whole of 1949, Israeli troops, policemen, and civilians killed as many as 1,000 infiltrators, and perhaps many more.

Casualties among the infiltrators gradually decreased during the following years. But they remained substantial. According to IDF figures, 191 infiltrators and 1 Jordanian soldier were killed on the Israeli side of the Israeli-Jordanian border, 88 infiltrators and 3 Jordanian soldiers were wounded, and 1,707 infiltrators (and 2 Jordanian soldiers) were captured during 1952. On the Israeli side of the border with Egypt (mainly along the Gaza Strip), 231 infiltrators were killed, 112 wounded, and 206 taken prisoner that year. Infiltrator losses in 1952 remained negligible along the Lebanese and Syrian borders, with 5 infiltrators killed, 5 wounded, and 434 captured along the Lebanese border, and 1 killed, 5 wounded, and 22 captured along the Syrian border.[82]

IDF intelligence concluded that Israeli troops killed an average of 36 infiltrators a month in 1951 and 33 a month in 1952, with 78 killed in March and 57 in April.[83] American officials reported that Israel shot dead 40 infiltrators a month in the first three months of 1953.[84]

From 1954 the available statistics show a dramatic drop in the number of infiltrators killed by Israeli security forces, in some measure paralleling the drop in the number of infiltrations—some 4,500 or fewer annually compared with between 9,000 and 16,000 in 1952. Moreover, from 1953-4, it was the Israel police rather than the IDF that were responsible for

[82] 'Infiltration into Israel in 1952 and the Recent Tension (Dec. 1952-Jan. 1953) along the Borders', ISA FM 2402/12. These figures appear to relate only to infiltrators killed, wounded, or captured by IDF troops—and do not include Arabs killed by troops in no man's land or in Arab territory.

[83] 'Infiltration in 1952 (Summary for the Months Jan.-Nov. 1952)', undated (but probably from Dec. 1952), ISA FM 2428/4 aleph. In May 1953 the acting DMI, Col. Yehoshafat Harkabi, reported that '292' infiltrators were killed between May and December 1951, '450' in 1952, and 149 in the first third of 1953. He also reported that Israel had apprehended 2,989 infiltrators in 1950, 2,336 in 1951, 2,434 in 1952, and 661 in the first four months of 1953. Again, these figures appear to relate only to infiltrators killed, wounded, or captured by the IDF. The Israel Police Special Branch ('Infiltration—Annual Survey, 1.1.52-31.12.52', Israel Police Special Branch/Section for Combating Infiltration, undated but with covering note, A. (or E.) Katznelenbogen to IDF General Staff/Operations, 3 Mar. 1953, ISA FM 2402/12 bet), reported that 133 infiltrators were killed and 379 captured by the police and Border Police in 1952. It appears that neither the IDF nor the police included in these reports infiltrators killed by settlement guards and mines.

[84] 'Israel-Jordan Border Relations: Annual Review from Jan. 1, 1952 through Feb. 16, 1953', Tyler to State Dept., 1 Apr. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2, 684a.85/4-153.

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much of the border, and the police appear not to have adopted the IDF's free-fire policy. Similarly, the IDF itself appears to have reduced its presence along the borders, preferring offensive, cross-border operations, and to have restricted its troops' freedom to fire on 'economic' infiltrators. The proportion of infiltrators detained rather than shot grew enormously. Thus, during May-December 1954 Police Special Branch statistics show Israeli troops and Border Police killing a total of 51 infiltrators, 6 of them Arab Legionnaires. But in the same period, they captured some 800 infiltrators, 160 of whom were defined as 'criminal', and expelled 600 who had been captured. In 1955 Israeli troops and police killed 36 'hostile' infiltrators and captured some 570 infiltrators, of whom 121 were defined as 'hostile'. Some 300 were expelled. In the first four months of 1956, 24 'hostile' infiltrators were shot dead and about 130 others captured, of whom 10 were described as 'hostile'; 64 were expelled.[85]

In sum, Israeli security forces killed some 400 infiltrators a year in 1951, 1952, and 1953. At least a similar number and probably far more were killed in 1950, and 1,000 or more in 1949. At least 100 (and perhaps many more) were killed during 1954-6. Thus, upward of 2,700 Arab infiltrators, and perhaps as many as 5,000, were killed by the IDF, police, and civilians along Israel's borders between 1949 and 1956. To judge from the available documentation, the vast majority of those killed were unarmed 'economic' and social infiltrators.[86]

As we have already noted, a variety of non-violent measures were adopted in Israeli settlements to frustrate infiltration: settlements and stretches of border were fenced with barbed wire and perimeters were brightly lit.

During 1949 and the early 1950s many of the Arab villages abandoned in 1948 were razed to prevent them from serving as hiding places and way

[85] Numbers culled from the detailed Israel Police Special Branch monthly and annual reports (1954-6) on infiltration, written by Katznelenbogen, head of the Minorities Section of Special Branch (until end of 1954), and, subsequently (during 1955 and 1956), by Meir Novick, head of Special Branch, all in CZA S92-11. The figures of infiltrators killed in 1954-6 appear too low and should be taken with a grain of salt: the figures are qualified by the adjective 'criminal' or 'hostile', leaving the reader wondering whether other, non-criminal or non-hostile, infiltrators were also killed, and, if so, how many; and it is probable that the IDF did not report all infiltrator deaths to the police. It is, therefore, likely that the figures for infiltrators killed during 1954-6 were higher, perhaps far higher, than those recorded in the Special Branch reports. Moreover, there are periodic hints that the IDF's free-fire policy remained in place along the Gaza Strip border in 1955-6. For example, in April 1956 Ben-Gurion instructed the IDF: 'To prevent infiltrators from reaping and grazing in our fields—ambushes and observation points must be maintained in appropriate places. . . which will make it possible to liquidate [*lehasel*] them immediately they appear and to capture their flocks alive' (quoted in Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 145). Israeli troops, police, and settlers captured 3,181 infiltrators in 1952 and 1,649 in 1953.

[86] A final, more accurate tally of the infiltrators killed during 1949-56 will be possible only when IDFA declassifies all relevant files.

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stations for infiltrators.[87] Periodically, Israel also waged propaganda warfare against infiltration via Israel Radio's Arabic broadcasts and IDF raids in the West Bank, during which troops would sometimes leave behind leaflets against infiltration. During 1952 Israeli troops penetrated a number of Gaza Strip villages and posted notices on walls warning against infiltration.[88]

Nothing, however, seemed to deter the infiltrators. On the most basic level, the problem, as understood by the IDF, was that the refugees' fear of hunger was far greater than their fear of Israeli bullets and mines. As one IDF intelligence officer put it: 'The motives for the infiltration are very powerful and stem from deprivation, hunger. . . often the infiltrators face a choice between death by hunger and deprivation and possible harm from our forces' fire. [They prefer the latter.]'[89]

Expelling Border Communities and Nudging Back the Borders

At the end of 1948, before the war had formally ended, Israel decided to clear its border areas of Arab villages, to a depth of five or ten kilometres. The motive of the policy—initially implemented at the beginning of November along the Lebanese border—was military: Arab villages along the border, just behind IDF positions and patrol roads, constituted a threat. They could receive and assist Arab troops and irregulars should the Arabs renew the war; harbour saboteurs and spies; and serve as way stations for infiltrating returnees, thieves, and smugglers. Partly depopulated villages, such as Tarshiha in the Galilee, beckoned infiltrators bent on resettlement. And some semi-abandoned border villages, such as Zakariya, in the Jerusalem Corridor, were a socio-economic burden on the state since the young adult males were mostly dead, incarcerated, or had fled to Jordan, while the old, the women, and the children of the village lived off government hand-outs. Lastly, the authorities wanted as small an Arab minority as possible in the new Jewish state.

In part, these border-area transfers were designed to hamper infiltration into Israel and, as such, may be viewed as one measure in Israel's anti-infiltration arsenal. They denied infiltrators potential havens, way stations, and resettlement sites.[90] One of the major border-clearing operations took

[87] Eshkol to Ben-Gurion, 5 Feb. 1951, CZA S-15/9786; Y. Korn, secretary of the Moshav Movement, to Settlement Dept., 2 July 1953, CZA S-15/9787; R. Weitz to Central District and A. Ikar, 9 June 1953, CZA S-15/9787; E. Kroll to Settlement Dept. directorate, 8 Dec. 1952, CZA S-15/9786; A. Uzieli (Be'er Tuvia) to Ikar, 6 June 1952, CZA S-15/9786; Sahar, *Sipur Hayai*, 98.

[88] Interviews with Yitzhak Reis, Yad Mordechai, 14 Oct. 1991, and Yehuda Shahor (Shwartz), Erez, 14 Oct. 1991.

[89] 'Infiltration and the Locals', Negev District HQ/Intelligence, 29 Apr. 1949, IDFA 1286\51 41

[90] For the border clearing operations, late 1948-50, see Morris, *Birth*, 237-53.

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place in Majdal/Ashkelon in 1950 after more than a year in which the town had served as a magnet for infiltrators from the Gaza Strip bent on theft, smuggling, visiting relatives, or pushing further inland. The transfer to Gaza of Majdal's 2,000-2,500 Arabs during the summer and autumn of 1950 was in large measure designed to curb this infiltration.[91]

Also connected with the struggle against the infiltrators, was Israel's effort to push the border with Jordan eastwards, especially in the Hebron foothills. This effort, in January-April 1949, stemmed largely from the Israeli desire to gain more territory and create a *fait accompli* before the signing of any armistice agreement with Jordan, but it was also designed to facilitate the struggle against the infiltrators, who grazed cattle and sheep, and cultivated fields along the front line. The Israelis felt that these infiltrators were slowly nibbling away at the country's *de facto* hold over the area and that, as a result, it might revert to Arab sovereignty. As one IDF intelligence officer put it: 'Israeli patrols do not get to these areas [from Tall as Sail eastwards]. If they are not thoroughly combed now, it will be more difficult later to impose [Israeli] rule on them.'[92]

The cease-fire lines, which, on the Jordanian front, had largely been set in July 1948, followed no natural boundary, and at best were only poorly marked. Sovereignty over various wadis, hills, and villages near and in no man's land was disputed, particularly along the border with the southern third of the West Bank, an area that had almost no Jewish settlements and was sparsely populated on the Jordanian side too. Palestinian farmers and refugees, living or encamped in or near Wadi Fukin, Surif, Idna, and Tarqumiya, regularly grazed flocks and cultivated land on the edge of no man's land, in no man's land, and, sometimes, on the Israeli side of the line, between or behind IDF positions. Standing IDF orders were to prevent any Arab grazing or cultivation near Israeli positions or in what was seen as Israeli territory, if necessary with fire. Some troops certainly feared that Arab 'grazers' and 'farmers' might attack them or might be disguised Arab irregulars, saboteurs, and agents. As one IDF intelligence report put it: 'There is a serious possibility that Arabs marauding in these areas [western and northern Galilee] pass on military intelligence to the enemy about what is happening in the border settlements.'[93]

In addition to firing on would-be infiltrators, cultivators, and grazers near their lines, IDF troops also harassed Arab villagers and refugees

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[91] Morris, *1948 and After*, 257-69.

[92] SDO (Kat"am), Intelligence Service (1), to Intelligence Service (1) and Southern Command/Intelligence, 8 Mar. 1949 (written on the basis of a report from D. Karon), IDFA 2539/50 14.

[93] 'Bi-Weekly Security Report No. Gimel-5 for the Period 30 Mar. 1950 to 14 Apr. 1950', intelligence officer, Haifa District/Brigade, 14 Apr. 1950 IDFA 240/54 115

encamped inside Jordanian territory to deter them from approaching the front lines. Eventually, in March-April 1949, Israeli pressure turned into an organized effort to evict these refugee and non-refugee Arab communities and push them eastwards, with the aim of staking claims to territory as far east as possible before the signing of the armistice agreement that would finalize the frontier. The wish to drive potential infiltrators away from the line also played its part in this policy.

Initially, the IDF exerted pressure on shepherds and cultivators discovered near their positions, in no man's land, and just on the Jordanian side of the line. The pressure sometimes resulted in atrocities. On 19 January 1949, for example, an IDF patrol encountered a group of four bedouin shepherds—the youngest aged 14—in no man's land, near Khirbet 'Illin, west of Surif. According to the testimony of one of them, the four were 'told to face to their rear and were shot by the patrol'. Three died on the spot. The fourth got away to tell his story before dying in a Bethlehem hospital. The troops apparently then raided Khirbet 'Illin and a neighbouring site and took several bedouin prisoner.[94] A few weeks earlier, on 17 December 1948, an Israeli patrol had entered the Wadi Fukin area and kidnapped a man and his daughter, presumably grazing sheep or cultivating a field. When the daughter tried to escape, she was shot in the neck, but managed to reach a hospital and report the incident.[95] On 14 February 1949 IDF troops entered Surif, where they 'kidnapped two shepherds, confiscated thirty-nine cows, and killed three cows and eight donkeys,' according to a complaint by the mukhtar, Naji Inmid Abu Fara. After investigating, the UN observer in the area, Commander Musgrave, commented: 'This was an apparent deliberate attack on civilians. The Jews have made repeated attacks on Arab civilians in this vicinity This is a gross violation of the truce.'[96]

On 22 February, in the Iraqi sector of the West Bank, opposite the abandoned Arab village of Qaqun, apparently in Israeli territory, a group of Israelis, some in uniform, others in civilian clothes, attacked thirty Arabs working in the fields and grazing cattle. One was wounded, one taken prisoner, and 165 sheep, twenty-six cows, and one donkey confiscated. Apparently the incident occurred in Israeli territory. But the Arabs had the UN observers' sympathy: 'The Arab civilians are in need of food very bad for they are aiding other Arab refugees in this area.'[97] A month later,

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[94] Arab Legion HQ to Senior Observer, UNO HQ, Jerusalem, 6 Feb. 1949, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-25.

[95] 'Report of Incident', Comm. C. W. Musgrave (USN), Bethlehem, 18 Dec. 1948, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-24.

[96] 'Complaint by Mukhtar [of] Surif', 15 Feb. 1949, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-24; Musgrave to Senior UN Military Observer (SUNMO), Jerusalem, 17 Feb. 1949, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-25.

[97] 'Investigation of Complaint or Report of Incident', Maj. P. H. Carter, US army, and Capt. Pierre Clement (French army) 24 Feb. 1949, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-25.

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on 21 March, IDF troops fired on—and apparently hit—a group of Arab cultivators working in no man's land, 700-1,000 yards from the Israeli positions, in the Zir`in area, on the northern edge of the West Bank. The UN observer who investigated the shooting reported that 'the Iraqi forces [in the area] have failed to take effective steps to control' Arab cultivation and grazing in no man's land, 'in spite of our repeated warnings that it was a truce violation'. The IDF liaison officer, Captain Arye Friedlander (Shalev),

> said [that] the Jewish troops had to drive these people off as they were afraid a group of them would approach and attack the Jewish positions, and the only method in which they could be driven off was by shooting them. To which I [Logan] replied, that he certainly did not need to shoot them as they were probably harmless, and that shooting near them would serve to drive them away. His reply was that his men were not good enough marksmen only to shoot near anyone.[98]

In early March the IDF, perhaps spurred by the feeling that the armistice agreements were imminent, began methodically to impose its control over the southern West Bank border area. The effort went beyond attacks on Arabs grazing and ploughing in the immediate vicinity of the lines to include assaults on villages in and on the edge of no man's land and expulsions. IDF aggressiveness in this sector may have been partly due to the behaviour of the local refugee population and, perhaps, to that of some local irregulars or Arab Legion units. The Israelis described the chain of incidents to UN observers:

> Arab civilians with their herds go into a valley where the pastures are good . . . five kilometres west of Surif. Some of these Arabs even go between the Israeli positions with their herds. Normally, the local [IDF] commander orders small arms fire directed above their heads to scare them away. When they remain near the Israeli positions, the local commander sends out patrols to take prisoner all men of [military] age. . . This is why nine Arab civilians were taken to a prisoners camp on 11 March. . . The local commander stated that on 11 March . . . irregulars infiltrated between Israeli positions at . . . Khirbet Jubeil Naqqar, directing rifle fire on this last position and trying to pass around it to the north . . . two mortar shots coming from Khirbet 'Illin were directed at the Israeli position . . . On 13 March . . . a group of 25 Arab irregulars advanced from Ghuraba to the Israeli position at Khirbet al Hammam.[99]

The Arab version of the start of the March troubles in the Idna sector, a few kilometres to the south, was somewhat different. The IDF, the Arab

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[98] 'Alleged Encroachments and Trespassing in the Zirin Area', Lt.-Col. Logan, SUNMO, to UN HQ, UN Military Observer Group, Nablus, 7 Apr. 1949, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-25; Col. Baruch, IDF General Staff Branch, to deputy chief of staff, UN Mediator's HQ, Advanced Command Post, Haifa, 31 Mar. 1949, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-25.

[99] Lt.-Col. Robin, UNMO Tel Aviv and W. O. van Wassenhove, UNMO Tel Aviv, to Tel Aviv Field Observers Group, Tel Aviv, 14 Mar. 1949, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-18.

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Legion complained, 'began to move eastwards [from Ad Dawayima] with patrols which withdrew every day'. A few days later they occupied Khirbet Umm ash Shuqaf, and then the villages of Khirbet Sikka (on 16 March) and Khirbet Beit `Awwa (on 20 March). Altogether, according to a UN observers' report, the IDF had occupied '35 or 36' *khurab* (small satellite villages) and bedouin encampments in and adjacent to no man's land, and had expelled their inhabitants eastward. What had happened in Khirbet Beit `Awwa was later described by the expelled villagers to Arab Legion officers:

> On . . . 19 March, they heard machine-gun fire all around Beit `Awwa. Women and children began to cry . . . . An [IDF] sergeant and about 25 soldiers entered the village and gathered 40 inhabitants, only men. They picked out three notables . . . and . . . told [them] that the inhabitants of Beit `Awwa would be authorized [i.e. allowed] to stay there and to cultivate part of their fields if they provided cows and sheep to the Jewish troops. The three notables agreed . . . . But [the next day], the same Jewish sergeant arrived with 50 soldiers and ordered the people to leave within two hours . . . . 1,800 Arab civilians, old men and women included, left the village with only a small part of their belongings . . . . For the time being part of them are sheltered in caves between Beit `Awwa and Dura, some have fled towards Hebron.[100]

Similar reports reached the Arab Legion and UN observers from other expellees from the *khurab*. On 21 March an IDF company reached Khirbet Jeimar and 'forced the 300 inhabitants to leave immediately. Most of the cattle . . . furniture and spare food were by force abandoned in the village. Khirbet Umm Kashram was also evacuated by the same way.' The troops, alleged one Arab mukhtar, stole 'several rings and other jewels' from women, and forty males were taken prisoner. Proceeding to the area, the two UN observers saw fresh IDF troops unloading trucks and entrenching themselves in new hilltop positions.[101]

The deputy chief of staff of UNTSO, Colonel Nickerson, summarized what had happened:

> Beginning 12 March and continuing thereafter . . . [there were reports of 'fleeing Arab civilians' and complaints] that new Israeli positions have been established . . . The Israelis have . . . killed several civilians, captured livestock, taken prisoners, and by threats and terrorization have driven the Arab civilian population away from their villages toward the East.[102]

Altogether, states the UN observers' report, some 7,000 inhabitants of the *khurab* west of Dura were driven out by the IDF in March 1949.[103]

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[100] 'Investigation Report', Maj. J. A. F. Simon (Belgian army) and 1st Sergeant P. K. Vermeersch (Belgian army), 24 Mar. 1949, UNA DAG-/13/3.3.1-18.

[101] 'Investigation Report', Vermeersch and Sergeant J. E. Schaheys (Belgian army), 21 Mar. 1949, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-18.

[102] Deputy chief of staff, UNTSO, to R. Bunche, acting UN Mediator for Palestine, 23 Mar. 1949, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-18.

[103] 'Investigation Report', Simon and Vermeersch, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-18.

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Within days, after UN intervention, the IDF withdrew from Khirbet Beit `Awwa and Khirbet Sikka. The Arabs in the Hebron foothills, some of them, perhaps, from among the recent expellees, soon exacted vengeance. A party of between fifteen and eighteen men infiltrated through IDF lines on 31 March 1949 and ambushed an Israeli command car near Al Qubeiba, killing all four passengers and mutilating their bodies. The IDF lodged a 'vigorous protest against the enemy's savagery and barbarity.'[104]

The border along the southern half of the West Bank, around Tall as Sail, Beit Jibrin, and Ad Dawayima, remained 'lawless' for years. The difficult terrain and the infrequency of IDF patrols, coupled with the absence of Jewish settlements along the line, made infiltration relatively easy, so much so that in mid-1950 one despairing IDF intelligence officer suggested that 'nothing' could ever end the infiltration phenomenon, and only an extraordinary effort by the IDF could 'return this area to full [Israeli] sovereignty'.[105] The early and mid-1950s witnessed a succession of serious Israeli-Jordanian clashes in this area, mostly stemming from infiltrations and IDF counter-operations. Only in the mid- and late 1950s did the area come under full Israeli sovereignty, following the establishment of Israeli settlements along the line (the 'Lachish Zone').

Expelling Infiltrators

From the first, Tel Aviv was understandably more perturbed by infiltrators bent on permanent resettlement than by short-term harvesters. The 'resettlers' seemed to pose a threat of a mass return, which would dramatically enlarge Israel's Arab minority and nullify one of the war's major gains—a relatively homogeneous Jewish state.

At the end of 1948, the IDF estimated that some '3,000-4,000' refugees had already infiltrated back with the aim of resettling in their native or

[104] Lt.-Col. B. Baruch, IDF General Staff, to deputy chief of staff, UN Mediator's HQ, Advance Command Post, Haifa, 4 Apr. 1949, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-18. One UN observer speculated a few days later that the ambush of the IDF command car had been a response to the IDF's killing of four villagers at nearby Khirbet Suqeifa (a kilometre from Al Qubeiba). The four, all refugees from Beit Jibrin living in Idna (Sirhan `Abd el Fattah Taha, 24; Mohammed `Abd el Fatah Taha, 20; `Amr `Abdullah `Abd el Kadir, 24; and `Abdullah Mohammed A`yesh, 19), were found on 2 Apr., each shot in the head. They had gone to forage for firewood and had been missing since 13 Mar. (Simon, SUNMO Bethlehem, to SUNMO Jerusalem, 6 Apr. 1949; Capt. W. W. Ham (US army) to SUNMO Jerusalem, 5 Apr. 1949; and Simon to SUNMO Jerusalem, 5 Apr. 1949, all in UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-18). The murder of the four at Khirbet Suqeifa is briefly mentioned in Dayan to Yadin and Harkabi, 11 Apr. 1949, ISA FM 2431/4 aleph.

[105] Negev District HQ/Intelligence to Southern Command HQ/Intelligence, OC Negev District, etc., 28 June 1950, IDFA 1380/51 31

neighbouring villages. The Foreign Ministry and the Military Government urged the Interior Ministry to complete the registration of Israel's Arabs so that the army could sort out legal from illegal inhabitants. (The November 1948 census had found some 70,000 Arabs living legally in the country, but it had not included bedouin or areas subsequently conquered by or ceded to Israel.) The illegals or 'infiltrators'—i.e. any not in their native villages or towns during the census or the subsequent registration of inhabitants—should be expelled, it was urged. Ben-Gurion concurred, effectively turning the proposal into policy: 'If it is patently clear that [the Arab] had infiltrated, he should be expelled,' he wrote in his diary at the end of 1948.[106] Within days, a thoroughgoing operation to weed out and expel the infiltrators was launched. It had been decided 'to transfer the

[106] Ben-Gurion, *Yoman HaMilhama*, iii. 918, 926, entries for 31 Dec. 1948, 4 Jan. 1949; Y. Shimoni to the IDF Intelligence Service, 1 Nov. 1948, ISA FM 2564/17; Shimoni to Interior Ministry, 20 Dec. 1948, ISA FM 2564/22. On 3 Oct. the Intelligence Service had asked Shimoni for the Foreign Ministry's opinion in the case of six infiltrators captured on the Lebanese border. Shimoni recommended that four be expelled and two (a non-Muslim and a former collaborator with the Jews) be allowed to stay. This is the first recommendation by the Foreign Ministry to expel infiltrators that I have come across. Ben-Gurion's diary entries described meetings between Ben-Gurion and Gen. Moshe Carmel (OC Northern Front) and Gen. Elimelech Avner (OC Military Government). Ben-Gurion interweaves the generals' situation reports and recommendations, and his own views and decisions into his descriptions. From the entries, it is clear that Ben-Gurion took the decision to expel the infiltrators after hearing the generals recommend such action. On 31 Dec. Carmel and his deputy, Mordechai Makleff, seem to have recommended either expelling the infiltrees or rounding them up and resettling them in a number of empty villages. But, in the Ben-Gurion-Avner conversation of 4 Jan. 1949, there is no mention at all of resettling the infiltrators in Israel.

The expulsion of infiltrators in late 1948 and the first half of 1949 rested on shaky legal foundations. Israeli law was slow to catch up with the state's political-military needs. Confusion reigned. There was a vague feeling that the expulsions were covered by British mandatory laws adopted by the Knesset in early 1949. Palmon felt that the British Mandate Immigration Law, which provided for the expulsion of anyone who had entered the country without a permit, was a sufficient basis for expelling infiltrators. He recommended, however, that the regional military governors be given summary judicial powers to try and expel infiltrators. But the attorney-general, Ya'acov Shimshon Shapira, demurred. He pointed out that the Immigration Law (ironically, used before 1948 by the British to expel 'illegal' Jewish immigrants to detention camps in Cyprus or back to Europe) could not be used against infiltrators, 'who are all residents of the country and Palestinian citizens [*ezrahim eretz-yisraeli'im*]'. The Mandatory Immigration Law, Shapira felt, could not be applied to citizens or residents of Palestine/Israel. Some officials felt that the Mandate Defence Emergency Regulations, also adopted wholesale by the Knesset, provided a sufficient legal basis for expelling infiltrators. At one point Shapira seemed to imply that these regulations covered the expulsion of infiltrators. But he probably knew better, as they only provided for the 'expulsion of citizens of the country, if they are suspected of treachery'. Shapira opposed giving the military governors judicial powers. A proper legal basis for expelling infiltrators was only established in July 1949, with the Knesset's legislation of the Emergency Defence and Security Law 1949, whose 15th clause provided for administrative (rather than judicial) expulsion (Palmon to attorney-general, 14 June 1949, and attorney-general to Palmon, 6 July 1949, both in ISA Justice Ministry Papers 5667 gimel, 25).

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bona fide infiltrators across the borders', the OC Military Government, General Elimelech Avner, said on 12 January 1949.[107]

The first mass round-ups and expulsions of the 'illegals' had taken place in December 1948, even before the formal decision to expel. Two groups of infiltrators, one of '17 persons, chiefly women and children, and the second of 42 persons, all men', were pushed across the truce lines in Samaria, into Iraqi-held territory. Two larger groups, one of 250 Arabs, and the other of 170, were expelled in the same manner shortly afterwards. The Iraqi authorities believed that 'the Zionists are determined to expel all infirm Arabs in order to be rid of maintaining them'.[108] It is likely that the bulk of the '170', who reached the village of `Ara, near Jenin, on 15 January 1949, were 'illegals' expelled from Tarshiha, a large, partially abandoned Arab village in Western Galilee. An American Quaker relief worker, of the AFSC, later described the round-up there. The IDF 'formed a cordon around the village and imposed a curfew. All males over 16 were gathered in the village square. Here they were questioned by a panel of eight Israelis.' The illegals were weeded out and then 'herded on to trucks, transported to a spot across the lines from Arab-held Jenin and . . . ordered to make their way to Arab territory'. According to the report, 'in all, 33 heads of families and 101 family members, ranging in age from 1 year to 79 years old, were arrested and deported'. A UN observer subsequently reported the arrival of these expellees in Iraqi-held `Ara. 'They say in Jenin', reported Commandant G. de Ganay, 'that this expulsion has occurred because of the arrival of a large number of Jews from Austria, who have been settled in the villages from which the Arab refugees were evacuated.' The UN observer noted that the local Iraqi commander had 'asked his government to expel an equal number of Jews out of Iraq into Jewish Palestine')[109]

`Ara village—which Jordan transferred to Israel in summer 1949 as part of the Israel-Jordan armistice agreement—seems to have been the regular dropping-off point in January for Arab expellees. A week before the Tarshiha incident, 128 Arabs ('97 men, 31 women and children') were dumped there by the IDF after being rounded up in the Galilee villages of Kabul and `Ibilin

> during an identity check at night . . . some because they had no Jewish [i.e. Israeli] identity card and others because they were not in their normal residence. The Jews

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[107] 'Decisions of the Meeting of the Military Government Committee', 12 Jan. 1949, ISA MAM 308/9.

[108] Arab Dept., Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to British Embassy, Baghdad, 5 Mar. 1949, PRO FO 371-75455.

[109] T. Bloodworth jun., vice consul, Haifa, to SecState, 7 June 1949, and 'Report on Evacuation of Residents from the Town of Tarshiha', C. Freeman, 25 Mar. 1949, both in NA RG 84, Haifa Consulate Classified Records, 350, Political Affairs, 1949; and 'Investigation of Complaint or Report of Incident', de Ganay, 15 Jan. 1949, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-25.

took them by truck to Khubbeiza on the 4th, 5th and 6th of January 1949. There they were ordered to walk to the Arab side.[110]

In the following weeks, UN observers and Iraqi troops in the Jenin area had their hands full. Israeli troops regularly searched the Galilee Arab villages and weeded out infiltrators. Often, they were assisted by hooded local informers who, led about by an IDF officer, pointed out the illegals. Occasionally, local Arab notables would give the IDF lists of illegals resident in their village.[111] Village mukhtars and other notables were regularly summoned to the offices of Israeli military governors and warned against harbouring or welcoming infiltrators.[112]

Every week or two, a new group of captured infiltrators was pushed by the IDF across the border into Iraqi-held territory. On 1 March a UN observer reported a transport from Kafr Yassif arriving at Salim village, in Iraqi-held territory. The group included Arabs from Birwe, `Amqa, Manshiya (near Acre), and Kafr Yassif. 'They had been spoiled of their gold items and of their money by the Jews.' The troops had fired over the expellees' heads to frighten or hurry them towards Arab-held territory, the observer wrote.[113] The departure of this transport, which had set out from Kafr Yasif, was witnessed by the AFSC's Charles Freeman, who had also witnessed the round-up at Tarshiha. Freeman reached Kafr Yasif on 28 February with a truckload of food for the refugees in the village. He found the site 'under curfew, roads were blocked by tanks [i.e. probably armoured cars or half-tracks], and 15 large trucks were standing ready. Men were being rounded up and checked.' A few days later, he visited the village again and found that 239 persons were no longer there: 'In each case whole families were removed . . . . Some of the refugees were allowed to take whatever they could of household equipment and clothing, but others were given only a few minutes' notice and were allowed to take only what they could carry by hand.' The villagers were told that some of the expellees were being taken to Majd al Kurum, another village inside Israel. And some, apparently, were. But others were taken to the border and

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[110] 'Investigation of Complaint or Report of Incident', Comdt. M. Turnier and Capt. L. Serre, 7 Jan. 1949, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-25.

[111] Capt. Y. Krasnansky, security officer, Western Galilee, to Military Governor, Western Galilee, 5 Dec. 1949, IDFA $\frac{922/52}{183}$, which relates that in Nov. the notables of Shfar-`Am (Shafa `Amr) gave the IDF a list of 'more than 300' illegals. See also Yirmiyahu Shmueli to the editorial staff, *Al Hamishmar*, undated (but probably from Nov. 1949) HHA kaf-90-1/6, for a letter from Maid al Kurum notables asking the IDF to come and take away twenty refugee families hiding in the hills near their village.

[112] Maj. R. Amir, military governor Westem Galilee, to Lt.-Col. Markovsky, Military Government HQ, 12 June 1949, IDFA $\frac{922/52}{820}$.

[113] 'Investigation of Complaint or Report of Incident', Capt. Serre, 1 Mar. 1949, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-25.

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pushed across—to be greeted by UN observer Captain Serre and his colleagues.[114]

On 26 March Serre gave a detailed description of another transport, of 28 persons—17 from Rama, 5 from `Amqa, 2 from Iqrit, 2 from Al Bassa, 1 from Acre, and 1 from 'Ibilin. Eleven of the infiltrators had been caught a week before and jailed in Acre. On 25 March they were trucked to Rama. That morning Jewish troops had 'surrounded [Rama] . . . collected outside all the men under rain and after investigation took 17 of them' together with those transported from Acre, to a point on the Afula-Lejjun road, where they were 'ordered to cross the lines' towards Jenin. The deportees claimed that they had been expelled either because they had not been in the country during the census and had not received Israeli permission to return or because the Israelis had thought they had weapons, had served in an Arab army, or had worked for the British during the Mandate. The deportees claimed they had not been fed the whole day and had left their families in their villages.[115]

One of the expellees handled by Serre that spring may have been a 12-year-old girl from the Western Galilee village of Kuweikat, who, after fleeing her home in 1948, took refuge in the neighbouring village of Abu Sinan. She and her family would occasionally infiltrate to Kuweikat to collect abandoned possessions. Decades later she recalled that, one morning in March 1949, Jewish troops had surrounded Abu Sinan and begun identifying the 'illegals'. 'If anyone was a refugee, they told him to fetch his family and get into the trucks. We weren't allowed to take anything with us. They filled nine big trucks and then they took us and threw us over the border.'[116]

An insight into the nature of at least some of these truck journeys to the frontier, lasting from two to twelve hours, is provided by 'M.M.', a woman from a kibbutz in the South, who witnessed one such episode in May 1950:

> We were waiting for a hitch beside one of the big army camps . . . . Suddenly two large trucks arrived, packed with blindfolded Arabs (men, women, and children). Several of the soldiers guarding them got down to drink and eat a little, while the rest stayed on guard. To our question 'Who are these Arabs?' they responded: 'These are infiltrators, on their way to being returned over the borders.' The way the Arabs were crowded together [on the trucks] was inhuman. Then one of the soldiers called his friend 'the expert' to make some order [among the Arabs]. Those of us standing nearby had witnessed no bad behaviour on the part of the Arabs,

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[114] 'Evacuation of Refugees from Kafr Yasif', C. Freeman (Acre), 25 Mar. 1949, AFSCA, Foreign Service, 1949, Palestine (Publicity), Reports Misc. 1949.

[115] 'Enquête[s] sur la plainte ou report sur l'incident', 1 Mar. 1949 and 26 Mar. 1949, both by Serre, UNA DAG-13/3.3.1-25.

[116] R. Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*, (London, 1979) 88-9.

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> who sat frightened, almost one on top of the other. But the soldiers were quick to teach us what they meant by 'order' [*seder*]. 'The expert' jumped up and began to . . . hit [the Arabs] across their blindfolded eyes and when he had finished, he stamped on all of them and then, in the end, laughed uproariously and with satisfaction at his heroism. We were shocked by this despicable act. I ask, does this not remind us exactly of the Nazi acts towards the Jews? And who is responsible for such acts of brutality committed time and again by our soldiers?[117]

The search and expulsion operations by the army in the Galilee Arab villages in November 1949 were condemned by Communist Party MK Tewfik Toubi as anti-Arab 'pogroms'. They had included, he said, humiliations, theft of Arab property, and beatings. Ben-Gurion denied Toubi's charges, labelling them a 'calumny' against the state and the IDF.[118]

Another search and expulsion operation, in Haifa's Wadi Nisnas district, on 21 January 1950, provoked left-wing criticism. Twenty-nine infiltrators had been caught in the sweep, which, according to Arab witnesses and Mapam MK Moshe Erem, had involved 'beatings' and resulted in a woman miscarrying. Police Minister Shitrit replied that the operation had followed reports about infiltrators 'whose presence [in the area] endangered State security . . . . The operation was carried out politely and fairly . . . . There was no brutal behaviour, no pushing or blows, and it is not correct [to say that] the operation was carried out without regard for elementary civil rights.' Shitrit maintained that no one holding a residence permit or ID card was arrested and he denied that any detainee had miscarried because of police behaviour. The woman, 'an infiltrator . . . was in her last months of pregnancy and gave birth to a dead child, but she did not miscarry'. In support, Shitrit quoted at length from the woman's subsequent statement: '"The police who arrested me and took me to the police station treated me very cordially. I also remember that the police brought me food . . . . I have no complaints about the police."'[119]

Kibbutz members such as 'M.M.' and Moshe Erem were not alone in feeling uneasy, not to say outraged, at the treatment of infiltrators. Sharett repeatedly complained—in private, to Ben-Gurion—in 1949—50 about

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[117] M.M. to *Al Hamishmar*, the Mapam Party's daily newspaper, undated, and covering letter, *Al Hamishmar* to the Mapam Knesset faction, 20 June 1950, both in HHA kaf-9-1/6. See also T. Segev, *1949—HaYisraelim HaRishonim* (Tel Aviv, 1984), 67-8, quoting an article that appeared in *HaOlam HaZeh*, 22 June 1950.

[118] *Divrei HaKnesset*, 3 (16 Nov. 1949), 71-2.

[119] Ibid. 3 (22 Mar. 1950), 1106-7; Shitrit to Erem, 16 Mar. 1950, HHA kaf-90-1/6; Intelligence Officer, Haifa District, to OC Haifa District, Northern Command/Intelligence (Field Security), 22 Jan. 1950, IDFA 240/54 115 The Israeli intelligence services occasionally used infiltrators the security forces had caught—usually against a promise that they would not be expelled if they carried out missions. On 3 Apr. 1950 Erem complained to Shitrit about the detention of an infiltrator who had been permitted to live in Lydda. The arresting police were apparently unaware of the man's services to Israeli intelligence (Erem to Shitrit, 3 Apr. 1950, HHA kaf-90-1/6).

what was happening, though his concern was more for Israel's (legally resident) Arab inhabitants and for Israel's image abroad than for the expellees. On 21 June 1949 he complained of brutality in an IDF roundup in Nazareth three days earlier. The '5,000' inhabitants of one area of the town were rounded up at dawn and checked in a barbed-wire compound, he said.

> The army did not allow anyone to remain at home. Among those incarcerated [behind the barbed wire] there were also pregnant women, babies, tired old people, and the sick. The army made no distinction between ordinary folk and notables, so that among those incarcerated was the Arab magistrate of Nazareth . . . . All these people were held in the compound for several hours, in overcrowded conditions, and without food and water. There were outbursts of shouting and yelling by the prisoners and on one occasion the troops fired over the crowd's heads . . . . I heard from a Jewish MK who visited Nazareth last Saturday that there had been thefts of money from [some] empty houses [during the round-up].

Sharett called for an investigation and suggested that in future the army avoid such round-ups and, instead, root out illegals and infiltrators by imposing curfews and going from house to house.[120]

This round-up was also criticized by the (Jewish) director of the Muslim and Druse Department in the Ministry for Religious Affairs, H. Z. Hirschberg, who complained of injuries to the person, honour, and purse of some of those interrogated. But he was even more upset by a recent search in an unnamed Druse village. 'I must stress', he wrote, 'that we are especially interested in good relations at least with part of the non-Jewish population—in this case, the Druse—and one must take special care during searches among them.'[121]

The army denied that anything untoward or brutal had happened in Nazareth:

> The round-up was carded out in a completely orderly manner. There were no depredations [*peg`ot*], not against women and children and not against men . . . . The charge that Arab women were harmed/insulted is a complete lie and calumny . . . . [But] it is true that there was no water at the place, as there is no water in the whole area,

wrote the deputy military governor of Nazareth.[122]

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[120] Sharett to Ben-Gurion, 21 June 1949, ISA FM 2402/12.

[121] H. Z. Hirschberg to operations officer, Military Government HQ, Northern Front, 27 June 1949, IDFA 922/52/126.

[122] Capt. Y. Tessler to Gen. Avner, OC Military Government, 26 June 1949, ISA FM 2402/12. The army was right in suspecting that there had been large-scale infiltration of refugees back to Nazareth. Aharon Haim Cohen, the Histadrut Arab Dept. representative in Nazareth, on 20 May 1949 estimated that 2,000 former inhabitants of the Nazareth district had infiltrated back since the end of the war. Cohen wrote that

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By winter 1949-50 criticism within the Israeli bureaucracy (prompted, in part, by foreign criticism) began to affect policy towards infiltrators. For months, as a form of punishment, the IDF had expelled captured infiltrators over borders *other* than those they had come across. At the end of November, IDF deputy CGS Makleff issued the following order: '1. In order to avoid political complications, please instruct [the units] that the expulsion of infiltrators is permitted only across the border from which they came. 2. The expulsion of the infiltrators of the north to the Gaza area and suchlike must be stopped.'[123]

The following month Foreign Ministry Director General Eytan wrote IDF CGS Yadin that Amman was continually complaining that Israel's expulsion of infiltrators to Jordan was 'illegal'. Eytan thought that Israel should continue to expel infiltrators, but

> it is preferable that this expulsion not be done in large groups at one go. Every time a large group is expelled, the matter reaches the MAC. I therefore ask you to instruct the relevant bodies to avoid expelling infiltrators in large groups, and, as far as possible, to expel them in small groups or individually.

That proposal followed a senior staff meeting at the Foreign Ministry where it was decided to ask the IDF to end the mass expulsions: 'If we expel small groups, it is possible that the matter will be [rendered negligible] and will not be raised at the [Israel-Jordan] MAC'.[124] But the importuning failed. The army probably viewed the matter from the perspective of cost-effectiveness—fewer, larger round-ups and transports were preferable to many smaller operations.

There was an easing of round-ups and expulsions in early 1950, perhaps due to the drop in infiltration, especially in the cold north, during the winter of 1949-50 and to the apprehension and expulsion of many if not most of 1949's 'resettling' infiltrators. But the round-ups and expulsions were resumed in the spring and, on 4 April 1950, forty-eight captured infiltrators were pushed across the Lebanese border at Rmaich.[125] Another seventy-three were expelled to Lebanon in May, but several dozen

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when the army or the police now attempt to return some of them to the borders, there are great outbursts of emotion among their people, similar to those that affected [Palestinian Jews] during the days of Aliya Bet [i.e. the illegal Jewish immigration to Palestine in British Mandate days, when the authorities expelled to Europe or Cyprus batches of Jewish 'illegals'] (Cohen (Nazareth) to secretariat of Arab Department (Histadrut), 20 May 1949, ISA FM 2564/10).

[123] M. Makleff to IDF General Staff Branch/Planning/Operations, 30 Nov. 1949, ISA FM 2402/12.

[124] 'A Consultation Concerning Affairs of the Israel-Jordan MAC, 7 Dec. 1949', and Eytan to Yadin, 7 Dec. 1949, ISA FM 2431/6.

[125] Capt. Friedlander to IDF Intelligence Section 9, Northern Command, etc., 16 Apr. 1950, ISA FM 2432/7; Riley to Cordier, 30 May 1950, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-27.

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were eventually admitted back after Israel conceded that they had been mistakenly expelled.[126]

The expulsion of infiltrators continued also in the centre of the country. On 20-2 June 1950 the IDF, with police assistance, mounted a three-stage round-up of infiltrators in Lydda and Ramle, stages 'B' and 'C' of the operation 'passing without incident or unpleasantness'. But, according to an IDF report, stage 'A' was marked by 'several cases of theft by soldiers and the police; company commanders took vigorous action to right the wrong'. Altogether, 135 persons were detained for questioning, of whom twenty-four were held for expulsion. The rest apparently were freed. According to the IDF, several of the detainees had participated in a recent murder of two Jews, 'and the rest serve as guides for criminal gangs who have been active throughout this period and caused trouble to [Jewish] inhabitants and security personnel'.[127] Sharett (privately) criticized this operation, too.[128]

Probably in some measure in response to the criticism, the army changed its *modus operandi*. Instead of rounding up the whole population of a village or urban quarter, and then sifting through them for illegals, the army would surround the village, impose a curfew, and mount a house-to-house search. Suspects were rounded up, concentrated in one area, and questioned. The 'proven' infiltrators were then trucked off to the border.

But this method also evoked an outcry, as at Abu Ghosh, a village west of Jerusalem with a history of friendship and collaboration with the Yishuv going back to the 1920s. In 1949-50 the IDF and police repeatedly mounted searches and round-ups in the village, and expelled infiltrators. After one such round-up, on 7 July 1950, in which 105 infiltrators were identified, detained, and expelled, the villagers wrote a letter of complaint 'to the Inhabitants of Israel', charging that the security forces had repeatedly

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[126] Riley to Cordier, 30 May 1950, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-27. The head of the Lebanese delegation to the Israel-Lebanon MAC believed that Israel was making a political mistake in expelling infiltrators to Lebanon:

> Most of these infiltrators are Muslims and [their expulsion to Lebanon] affects the political balance [between Christians and Muslims] in Lebanon. The Christians in Lebanon, who are fighting for their influence and who do not want to become a minority, could become such a minority if the stream of Palestinian Muslims continues to reach Lebanon. The moment there is a Muslim majority in Lebanon, this country will become an Arab state like the rest of the Arab states, and Israel might lose a potential ally in the future. Israel's interest and that of the Christians of Lebanon is contrary to such a development.

The Lebanese delegate, Mukadem Freifer, asked the Israelis to send fewer Muslim expellees to Lebanon and to divert them, instead, to Jordan (Major Ze'ev Shaham, chief Israel delegate to Israel-Lebanon MAC, to IDF General Staff officer for the MACs, etc., 15 Nov. 1950, ISA FM 2432/7).

[127] Deputy military governor Lydda-Ramle district to Military Government HQ, 26 June 1950, ISA FM 2402/12.

[128] Sharett to Ben-Gurion, 29 June 1950, ISA FM 2402/12.

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> surrounded our village . . . taken our women and children, and dumped them over the border, and to [the] Negev Desert, where many met their deaths . . . Last Friday . . . we awoke to shouts from the loudspeaker announcing that the village was surrounded and all those leaving their homes would be shot. We were forced to shut ourselves in our houses, which the police and military forces began to enter and search thoroughly, but they found no . . . contraband. In the end, they rounded up our women, old people, children, the sick, the blind and pregnant women, using force and blows . . . . Then they took the crying, shouting prisoners to an unknown destination, and we still do not know what has befallen them.[129]

The ruling Mapai Party easily quashed a Knesset motion for the agenda by Erem, who complained of the security men's brutality. Ben-Gurion, as was his wont, defended the army and denied the charges, pithily restating government expulsion policy (without—again, as was his wont—actually using the word 'expulsion'): 'We will not let infiltrators come, and infiltrators who do come, will be sent back.'[130]

But Sharett was troubled:

> The expulsion by force of women and children arouses the [wrath of] the public and troubles its conscience. The public will not long countenance such methods . . . The battle against the infiltrators must be waged with methods that will not stir public opinion to rebel against the government.

Sharett suggested that either the government persuade the public that this was the right course—or it should change course. In practice, Sharett recommended that, rather than wait for months for 'an accumulation' of illegals in a particular village, the security forces should go in for more frequent searches of smaller dimensions. 'One of the things in the matter of Abu Ghosh that the public found difficult to swallow' was that the infiltrators had reportedly been in the village 'up to a year and more'. Sharett also recommended that 'only adult males', and not women and children, be expelled.[131]

The US Embassy in Tel Aviv, taking note of the Abu Ghosh expulsion, commented that world opinion was not going to deter Israel from keeping Arabs 'out of her territory'. Israel will remain 'a fairly lethal [place] for Arabs not on the good books of . . . the Israeli police'.[132]

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[129] 'Open Letter to the Inhabitants of Israel', the inhabitants of Abu Ghosh, 10 July 1950, HHA kaf-90-1/6.

[130] *Divrei HaKnesset*, 6 (11 July 1950), 2151-4.

[131] Sharett to adviser for special affairs, 14 July 1950, ISA FM 2402/12.

[132] R. Ford (Tel Aviv) to State Dept., 14 July 1950, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 2. Expulsion of infiltrators from Abu Ghosh continued sporadically for years. In 1952, a Mapai MK, Beba Idelson, tabled a parliamentary question about the arrest and expulsion to Jordan on 4 July of an Abu Ghosh woman, Jamila Rahib Salim, and her four children. The woman, said Idelson (also a woman), had cancer. Police Minister Shitrit replied that a doctor had determined that she was fit enough to be expelled (though he had diagnosed what Shitrit called a tubercular—not cancerous—'sore' (*petza*) on her chest). Israel dumped the woman and her children in no man's land at the Mandelbaum Gate, Jerusalem, after the Jordanians

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In the early years, the Military Government was a key element in the expulsion policy. But after 1949-50 its importance in curbing infiltration waned substantially, due to the infiltrators' changed motivation. The Military Government was important when much of the infiltration was for resettlement. Its officers were responsible for weeding out such resettlers. But, as theft-oriented infiltration grew, the Military Government lost part of its role; border security was the army's rather than the Military Government's affair.

Yet the Military Government remained 'interested' in infiltration in so far as some infiltrators maintained contacts—smuggling, family visits—with Israeli Arab villagers. Among Israeli Jews, there was a widespread fear that, if the Military Government was scrapped and the Israeli Arab minority were free to move about at will, infiltrators would manage to move in and out of Israel with greater ease. The head of the Military Government, Lieutenant-Colonel Yitzhak Shani, said at the end of 1953: 'The cancellation of the Military Government would mean the opening of the border areas to uninterrupted infiltration and the opening of the gates to the penetration of infiltrators into the interior of the country in a growing wave.'[133]

Expelling Negev Bedouin

Israel's handling of the Negev bedouin during the early 1950s can also be viewed at least partly through the prism of the anti-infiltration policy. Periodically, sometimes after specific attacks on Jews, the IDF rounded up and expelled bedouin tribes and sub-tribes from the Negev into Sinai or, less frequently, to the southern Hebron Hills. Often the expulsion followed a loyal (Israeli) tribe's complaint against a belligerent or economically encroaching neighbour. Bedouin tribes and sub-tribes wanted exclusive possession of pastures and wells. The clans or sub-tribes of the `Azazme, a tribe with a history of anti-Yishuv activity, were among the more frequent IDF targets. A large proportion of the `Azazme left the country temporarily during 1948. The lack of permanent domiciles or, even, camping areas exacerbated the problem of determining which bedouin were 'legal' residents (i.e. had been resident within Israel continuously during 1948) and which 'illegal' (i.e. had been out of the country for all or parts of 1948-9). The exclusion of the bedouin from the 1948 census compounded the problem.

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refused to let her in. Eventually, the Jordanians relented and allowed the family in (*Divrei HaKnesset*, 12/2 (21 July 1952), 2638-9).

[133] Sharett, *Yornan Ishi*, i. 150-1, entry for 15 Nov. 1953. See also H. Ben-Zvi to the Military Government Committee, 26 Jan. 1956, Emeq Hefer Regional Council Archives 12/31.

To the problem of illegal residence was added, in the early post-1948 years, an increase in attacks against Israeli and Israeli bedouin targets. By September 1949 Israeli's chief representative on the EIMAC was already writing to Dayan:

> In the whole [border] area the number of mining attacks and provocations by Arab infiltrators has increased. They are exploiting the reduction of our forces in the areas in order to harm us by mining, theft, and robbery. In a number of places they have also tried to return [permanently] to abandoned villages and areas.[134]

As with infiltration in the north and centre of the country, the Israeli authorities soon came to regard expulsion as a solution. In November 1949, Jordan complained, Israel expelled some '2,000' bedouin from the Beersheba area to the West Bank.[135]

A further expulsion of Negev bedouin to Jordan occurred the following May. About 100 families (some 700-1,000 souls of the `Azazme or Djahalin tribes) were expelled to the southern Hebron area following what an Israeli spokesman termed 'a complaint by other [Negev] bedouin'. The 'other bedouin' were either Tayahe or Tarabin tribesmen, who, according to Major Michael Hanegbi, the Negev's military governor, maintained good relations with the Israeli authorities:

> but infiltration by other, hostile bedouin presented a security problem, as those now here sought the protection of the army against nomads who robbed and pillaged, and grazed their flocks on land sown by others . . . . [So] Israeli officers explained to the [`Azazme] tribal sheikhs that no Arabs could be permitted to cross the frontier into Israel until a permanent peace settlement was reached, and a few days later a party of troops in eight or nine vehicles turned up at their encampment to ensure that they left the area. In a day-long operation, the bedouins loaded their tents and their possessions on their camels and went off to the north-east, taking their livestock with them. Not a single shot was fired, nor were they escorted to the frontier. There was no resistance whatever.

Explaining the expulsion, Dayan, OC Southern Command, said that

> the problem of Arab refugees in general could not be solved by individual groups infiltrating back into the country. . . . The army had strict orders . . . to send back across the lines all those attempting to enter the country illegally. . . . Although the soldiers had orders to shoot if necessary . . . Dayan said he knew of no incidents where it had been necessary to open fire . . . . [Dayan added that] there was no intention . . . of expelling from Israel a single Arab [of] those now [legally] here, and it was ridiculous to think that [the] government was trying [to] decrease the Arab population by such methods.[136]

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[134] Lt.-Col. A. Azaryahu to Dayan, 19 Sept. 1949, ISA FM 2438/6.

[135] Cordier to Riley, 19 Nov. 1949, UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0-1.

[136] '700 Hostile Beduin Tribesmen Compelled to Leave Negev', FM memo., undated (but early 1950), apparently based on a briefing by Dayan and Hanegbi, ISA FM 2431/6.

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Several `Azazme sub-tribes, who apparently continually crossed back and forth between Sinai and the Negev, were repeatedly expelled to Egypt during the early 1950s. Israeli policy regarding most of the central Negev tribes or sub-tribes, at least in the eyes of Foreign Ministry officials, was 'simply to maintain the status quo for the time being, provided they [the bedouin] do not become a nuisance and start harassing our settlements or communications'. As to the `Azazme, 'our policy has been to drive them away again from time to time'. The `Azazme, who raided other bedouin tribes in the Negev and, occasionally, sabotaged Israeli targets and laid mines on patrol tracks, were regarded as a perennial 'nuisance'. Beginning on 20 August 1950, the IDF launched a series of round-ups and expulsions of the `Azazme in and around the Al Auja DMZ. These expulsions can also be seen as part of the continuing Israeli effort to impose its sovereignty over the DMZ. On 2 September IDF units rounded up hundreds of `Azazme tribesmen (an UNTSO complaint spoke of '4,000') living in and around the zone 'and drove them . . . into Egyptian territory'. According to Israeli Foreign Ministry officials, the expulsion was triggered by a mining incident near Kibbutz Nirim, in which a kibbutz doctor was killed.[137] The perpetrators had been tracked to an `Azazme campsite. A unit of fifteen jeeps was then sent out, accompanied by a reconnaissance aircraft.

> Most of the [bedouins] fled when the dust of this approaching expedition was spotted, abandoning some thirty tents, which were destroyed. Some of the bedouin, who were armed, engaged the Israel party, which returned fire . . . killing some seven or eight of the Arabs.

A further expulsion of `Azazme tribesmen took place on 11 September, according to Riley, who put the total number of bedouin at Al Qusaima in Sinai in mid-September at 6,200 (the majority having been recently

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This expulsion is also referred to in Riley to Cordier, 30 May 1950, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-27. Riley speaks of 1,000 expellees of the Djahalin tribe. Teveth (in *Moshe Dayan*) relates that in 1950 Dayan ordered the expulsion from the northern Negev to the Hebron Hills of a group of Hebron Hills bedouin who had sown some '70,000 dunams' inside Israeli territory. The wheat was then harvested by Israeli settlers. Subsequently, relates Teveth, infiltrators from the Hebron Hills (presumably from among these bedouin)—'with [Arab] Legion permission if not at its initiative'—burnt the Israeli granaries at Yattir. In response, Dayan ordered the IDF's Minorities Unit, commanded by Major Haim Levakov, to retaliate by burning Arab granaries in two Hebron Hills villages, Khirbet Markaz and Khirbet Jinba. The operation was carded out on the night of 30 May 1951. Teveth alternatively attributes this chain of events to 1951 (pp. 348-9) and 1950 (p. 385). A possible explanation is that the bedouin were expelled by Dayan in 1950 and burnt the granaries at Yattir in 1951.

[137] M. Comay (Tel Aviv) to E. Elath (London), 6 Oct. 1950, ISA FM 2592/18.

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expelled from the Negev). Altogether, the IDF killed thirteen bedouin during these expulsion operations, wrote Riley.[138]

Subsequently, the American *chargé d'affaires* in Tel Aviv, Richard Ford, complained to Ben-Gurion that, 'while one of his earlier predecessors had successfully commanded [the] sun to stand still, there existed some doubt [as to] Israel's ability so far to disrupt nature's laws as to expect Nomadic tribes abruptly to stop [the] custom of centuries'. Ford urged Israel to adopt 'humane procedures' towards the bedouin. Ben-Gurion, 'reported Ford, a 'profound student of Old Testament miracles, [who] seemed [to] enjoy being bracketed with Joshua', said that steps were being taken to relieve the bedouins' plight.[139]

In response to the `Azazme expulsions, Egypt's King Farouq reportedly ordered the expulsion from Egypt of 'ten thousand stateless Jews'. A special Egyptian ministerial committee then ordered several additional, measures including the confiscation of E£4 million of Jewish property.[140] But the Egyptians eventually backed down, and the anti-Jewish measures were suspended.

In explaining its actions, the IDF maintained that the `Azazme had 'for months past rendered [the Negev] unsafe by depredations and armed attacks'. The military spokesman said that, during the August-September period, four vehicles had been blown up by mines; two persons had been murdered; and there had been twenty-one break-ins or attempted break-ins into Jewish settlements. According to Riley, the Egyptians also regarded the `Azazme as 'trouble-makers' but insisted that they were really permanent inhabitants of the Negev rather than of Sinai and therefore should not be expelled to Egypt. The IDF put the number of those expelled at 'several hundred' rather than Riley's 4,000-6,000.[141] But some of the expelled `Azazme quickly made their way back into Israeli territory

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[138] Teddy Kollek, head of the US Dept., FM, told US Embassy officials in Tel Aviv that Dayan had decided, apparently 'on his own authority', to get rid of the `Azazme by frightening them. He sent in jeeps to chase some 300 into Sinai. Six or seven bedouin were killed. The bedouins then retaliated 'by planting some mines and by attacking lone [Israel] army patrols. This was what Dayan was looking for.' The IDF was then sent in for a 'mopping up campaign', and 2,000-3,000 bedouins were pushed into Sinai. Kollek said that Israel had been at fault and that Dayan, too, has 'now recognised his mistake'. He said that the tribesmen were now being allowed back (Ford to SecState, 28 Sept. 1950, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 2).

[139] Ford to SecState, 9 Oct. 1950, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan.

[140] Ford to SecState, 19 Sept. 1950, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Egypt.

[141] 'Information for Israel's Missions Abroad No. 113: General Riley's Announcement about the Expulsion of Bedouin', 22 Sept. 1950, ISA FM 2402/12; the office of the adviser for special duties (Shiloah) to the directors of the US, Commonwealth and West Europe departments, FM, 10 Sept. 1950, ISA FM 2550/16; Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 23 Sept. 1950, BGA; Riley to Cordier, 12 Sept. 1950 (cable numbers 84-90 and 91), UNA DAG-1.2.5.2.0-1; 'El Auja Demilitarized Zone, Background Note', 25 Apr. 1957, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-48.

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and began ploughing tracts of land.[142] Perhaps some were pushed or urged across the border by the Egyptians, in response to the original Israeli expulsion. The Egyptians had thrown across the border '4,000' `Azazme tribesmen, complained the Israelis.[143]

In September 1952 the IDF expelled some 130 families (850 souls) of the As Sanna tribe from the northern Negev to the southern Hebron Hills. The Sanna, originally camped just south of Beersheba, were initially ordered to move further south. They refused, saying they would be short of water there. They were then given the option of crossing into Jordan—and they took it. 'Israel delighted at this idea [i.e. choice] and reportedly asked them to sign statements [saying that] they [had] wanted to go to Jordan. Thus Israel [was] not technically guilty of expulsion,' reported an American diplomat.[144]

Subsequently, several thousand more `Azazme and other bedouin tribesmen were expelled to Sinai. According to one Israel Foreign Ministry report, during 1949-53 Israel expelled all told 'close' to 17,000 Negev bedouins, not all of them alleged infiltrators.[145]

The `Arava Expulsion

The mass village round-ups and expulsions of infiltrators ended in summer 1950, about half a year after officials such as Eytan had begun calling for their cessation. Henceforward, through the 1950s, infiltrators (except for the Negev-Sinai bedouin) were expelled individually or in small groups and with as little publicity as possible. Probably influential in this change of policy was the criticism surrounding the Abu Ghosh round-ups and, more importantly, the mass expulsion in the `Arava (Wadi `Araba) at the end of May 1950.

The `Arava is the hot wasteland astride the Israeli-Jordanian frontier between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of `Aqaba (Eilat). On 31 May 1950 the IDF conveyed about 120 Arabs in two crowded trucks to a point near the border, at 'Ein Husb (Hatzeva), and ordered them to cross to Jordan,

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[142] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 21 Dec. 1950, BGA.

[143] B. de Ridder (Jerusalem) to Cordier, 15 Nov. 1950, and de Ridder to Cordier and Riley (New York), 20 Nov. 1950, both in UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0-1.

[144] Tyler to State Dept., 26 Sept. 1952, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan, Box 6. The reporting US consular official commented: 'Israel is for the Jews, and Israel intends to make it so uncomfortable for all Arabs now in Israel that eventually they will desire to emigrate. While situation Israel unique and understandable, it probably not fully in accord with UN resolutions on minority populations' (Tyler to State Dept., 20 Oct. 1952, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan, Box 6).

[145] M. Vardi, Consular Department, FM to ?, 29 June 1953, ISA FM 2402/12.

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firing bursts over their heads to urge them forward. Most made it. The remaining expellees, two or three dozen in number, 'may be assumed . . . [to have] perished from thirst and starvation', wrote Kirkbride, the British Minister in Amman.[146]

Glubb called the affair 'a bad case of sadism'. He and his officers questioned the survivors, who 'looked the most wretched and miserable specimens'. Glubb categorized them thus:

(*a*) 'Members of divided families who infiltrate across the line to find their relatives, or who fled from what is now Israel territory when the Jews arrived there, abandoning money and valuables in their homes.'

(*b*) 'Refugees caught *en route* from Gaza to Jordan.'

(*c*) '. . . Arabs living in their homes in Israel, with whom the Jews have become displeased for some reason or other. Some of these cases seem to be revenge against Arabs alleged to have fought on the Arab side in the fighting two years ago.'

Some of the expellees had been held for weeks, before the expulsion, in a makeshift IDF detention centre at Qatra, near Rehovot. Kirkbride, exaggerating, called it 'a concentration camp . . . run on Nazi lines'. One of the survivors had had fingernails extracted; most showed signs of having endured severe beatings. Glubb believed that there was 'a policy of terrorism and frightfulness' towards the Israeli Arab community: 'the Jews want them all to emigrate. They therefore try to persuade them with rubber coshes and by tearing off their fingernails whenever they get the chance.' Glubb conceded: 'I do not know whether this is the policy of the Israel cabinet, but it must certainly be known and winked at on a ministerial level . . . . The brutality is too general to be due only to the sadism of ordinary soldiers.[147]

The Israeli version of the affair—though not publicized—was not much different. The circumstances of the expulsion, according to Kollek, head of the US Department at the Israel Foreign Ministry, were 'pretty horrible'. In a meeting with American diplomats he explained that the purpose of transporting the expellees from central Israel to the `Arava, in the far south, 'is to make it difficult for these Arabs to return to their homes in Arab Palestine—the longer the trek to their homes, the more they will think twice about infiltrating into Israel again'. Kollek denied that

[146] 'Monthly Situation Report for the Jordan for the Month of June 1950', Kirkbride to FO, 1 July 1950, PRO FO 371-82703 ET1013/7. See also Riley to Cordier, 7 June 1950, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-27.

[147] Glubb to Kirkbride, 28 June 1950, PRO FO 371-82205; 'Monthly Situation Report for the Jordan for the Month of June 1950', PRO FO 371-82703 ET1013/7. Glubb wrote about the incident at length in his memoirs (*Soldier*, 247-9), where he says that 'about twenty [of the `Arava expellees] died'. Kirkbride's estimate ran to thirty-three dead—out of the '120' expellees who had set out.

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the expellees had been deprived of water and food during the truck journey, but conceded that those who had removed their blindfolds had been beaten by the troops. They had been forced across the border with shots fired 'above their heads', said Kollek, who added that 'he had no excuse for the brutality that had without a doubt been used'. But he did not believe that 'anyone's fingernails had been pulled out'. He said the officer in charge of the transport was 'now standing before a Court Martial'.[148]

On 13 June the US military attaché in Tel Aviv 'confirmed' that 'one' court martial had been 'completed'—but had, and gave, no details. Officially, Israel stood its ground, unrepentant and uncommunicative. There were no apologies, and there was no announcement of any court martial. Indeed, there was no admission that anything untoward had occurred. Rather the opposite. On 18 June 1950 the Israeli *chargé d'affaires* in London published the following statement in the *Observer*:

> No evidence of deliberate maltreatment has been found . . . It does . . . seem somewhat irresponsible to make accusations of Nazi behaviour against Israel on the basis of incidents which at this stage appear to have occurred on the Jordan side of the border—such things are not unknown among the Beduin tribes of southern Jordan, as Lawrence and others have noted.[149]

The Jordanians, understandably, were incensed. Some months later, in December 1950, King `Abdullah was to tell the American minister in Amman, Drew, that he was 'at end of [his] patience with Israelis'. The king said that, each time he had neared agreement in the secret peace negotiations with Israel, the Israelis had 'spoiled everything by some act of aggression, such as Wadi Araba'.[150]

One need not accept `Abdullah's *post facto* ascription of the failure of the Israel-Jordan peace process to the `Arava expulsion and to other Israeli 'acts of aggression' to understand that that expulsion (and other Israeli actions) had indeed had a seriously adverse effect on the secret peace talks. Three days after the expulsion, Jordan's defence minister, Fawzi Pasha, had told Drew that his govemment's 'patience [was] exhausted by [the] latest Israeli provocation', and had hinted that Jordan might embark on a retaliatory policy.[151] Drew himself wrote that he could not

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[148] C. P. McVicker jun. to Ford, 9 June 1950, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan.

[149] Letter quoted in Frickroot (London) to State Dept., 20 June 1950, NA RG 59, State Dept. Records, LM 60, Palestine and Israel, Foreign Affairs, Roll 1.

[150] Drew to SecState, 5 Dec. 1950, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 1. The King (who had also complained of an Israeli aircraft that had buzzed his palace) according to Drew had threatened 'to revert to tactics he learned during Arab revolt after [*sic*] World War I and organize sabotage and terrorism within Israel'. Drew did not take the threat seriously but concluded: 'for time being Israelis have lost their one sincere friend in whole Arab world.'

[151] US Embassy, Amman, to State Dept., 5 June 1950, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan.

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understand Israel's actions, 'so reminiscent of brutality of which they were victims elsewhere'. By these actions, the 'Jews are not contributing to creating favourable atmosphere for peace settlement with Jordan Government which they claim to seek'. A similar view was expressed in London.[152]

Jordan quickly passed on information about the atrocity to the Western media, scoring important points against Israel. The most telling story appeared on the front page of the *Observer* (London) on 11 June, written by Philip Toynbee, the journalist son of historian Arnold Toynbee. Philip Toynbee had usually been sympathetic towards Israel. He had stopped in Amman on his way to Israel when the `Arava story broke and had been very moved by his interviews with some of the survivors. The upshot was an atrocity story which implicitly compared Israel to Nazi Germany:

> One member of the outcast race [i.e. the Palestinians], a heavy young man with the dull vacant look of Van der Lubbe [i.e. the Dutchman falsely arrested and executed by the Nazis for setting fire to the Reichstag in 1933], had been arrested while grazing a cow near the state frontier. The blue-uniformed [Israeli] police with almost incredible *naïveté* . . . believed him to be a spy . . . and two of his fingernails were pulled out before they learned better. A young schoolmaster entered [Israel] illegally in order to be again with his family. He was . . . immediately arrested. One old mason, driven desperate by unemployment, tried to get out of [Israel] with his daughter. He was arrested and the daughter [was] shot dead while trying to escape. About a hundred of them collected from all parts of the State were concentrated in a central camp. One June [*recte* May] morning about 7 o'clock, they were taken from the prison camp, [and] herded into two motor trucks . . . . The army blind[folded] them, barking at them and waving their rubber coshes. On the long tedious journey through the burning countryside one of the victims would occasionally try to see but was hit over the face or back with a cosh . . . . At last . . . they reached the remotest . . . part of the frontier. It was now eight o'clock in the evening and they had had nothing to eat and drink all day. A compassionate captain ordered two buckets of water to be brought, but as soon as his back was turned the soldiers spilled the water into the dust. The bandages were now taken from their eyes and they were told that three would be counted and anyone not running hard by then would be shot . . . . As they ran Bren gunfire opened above and between them so that they were forced to split up into groups of three and four. This story, I know, is sickeningly familiar, and it is only the roles which have been changed. The outcast race is not the Jews and the state is not . . . Nazi Germany . . . . The frontier area is the terrible Wadi Araba . . . a desert valley far below sea level where only lizards and locusts can live, and where in the daytime the sand scorches the bare flesh. Since there was only moonlight when the prisoners were released, nearly all were hopelessly lost by the time the sun rose . . . . The luckiest were picked up on the second day by friendly beduins . . . . Others were

[152] Drew to SecState, 5 June 1950, and L. Douglas (London) to SecState, 7 June 1950, both in NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 1.

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> wandering for four days, eating lizards and drinking stagnant water or their own urine . . . . By the fourth day some 70 out of the 100 had been saved, but many had stories of others they had been forced to leave dying in the desert . . . I interviewed nine or ten of them separately . . . their stories coincided . . . I saw weals and sores caused by prison beatings, scorched and swollen feet, and two almost nailless fingers of the young grazier . . . Nothing can excuse the inhuman brutality of their treatment,

wrote Toynbee.[153]

The reports in the British press sent shock waves through the Israeli bureaucracy The Israel Embassy in London reported that 'the affair was becoming very damaging'. It asked that the government issue

> a public statement that an inquiry would be made and the guilty, if any, punished. To be absolutely cynical about it, that would have been quite enough—if, for internal reasons, our inquiry was not politic, it could have been forgotten. The British public are, after all, accustomed to colonial incidents of this nature and it is part of the accepted formula for the government to promise an inquiry in order to quieten things down.[154]

Western diplomats made representations in Tel Aviv. Walter Eytan was moved to write directly to Ben-Gurion (possibly at Sharett's behest) urging the 'need to determine a clear and consistent policy' for dealing with infiltrators. He asked that Ben-Gurion convene a policy-making forum to decide on a line 'so that incidents of the sort that occurred last week are not repeated'.[155] To the US Ambassador in Tel Aviv, McDonald, Eytan wrote:

> I was much disturbed by what you told me Wednesday about the incidents alleged. . . . Preliminary results of the inquiry show that there is certainly some measure of truth in the allegations. Even if the incidents, and in particular the brutalities which were stated to have accompanied them, lost nothing in the telling, the fact that anything of the kind occurred at all remains a serious source of concern and regret. I am instructed to inform you that further energetic investigation is being carried out, and that any officers or men shown to have been guilty of wanton or cruel behaviour will be punished.[156]

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[153] M. R. Kidron (London) to W. Eytan (Tel Aviv), 19 June 1950, and enclosed Toynbee article, 'A Tragic Change of Role', *Observer*, 11 June 1950, ISA FM 2402/12.

[154] Kidron to Eytan, 19 June 1950, ISA FM 2402/12.

[155] Eytan to Ben-Gurion, 14 June 1950, ISA FM 2402/12.

[156] Eytan to J. McDonald, 9 June 1950, ISA FM 2402/12. See also Eytan to Sir Knox Helm, 9 June 1950, ISA FM 2592/18, in which he wrote: 'I have the highest authority for informing you that any officers or men of the Israel Defence Army [*sic*] found guilty of wanton or cruel behaviour will be punished.' Whether anyone was tried or punished for the `Arava expulsion is unclear. IDFA officials were unable or unwilling to produce the relevant file/s.

The expulsion and the subsequent Western news reports triggered the first full-scale political—ethical debate in Israel—though in camera—about the policy towards the infiltrators. For the first (and last) time during the 1950s, a major Mapai leadership forum dealt with the issue. In the course of the debate, Sharett and Dayan gave some early indications of the rift that was soon to emerge between the foreign minister's Moderate diplomatic approach and the defence establishment's hardline or Activist stance towards the Arabs, as epitomized in the retaliatory policy (see Chapter 6 *et al.*).

Distressed by the harm done to Israel's image and, perhaps, morally outraged, Sharett opened the debate by declaring that, as in many areas, so in Israel's battle against the infiltrators,

> we tend to go too far. Under no circumstances does the war against infiltration necessitate . . . those means that the British and American press . . . have condemned, and which we have denied [although] no one in the world, other than the Jews, believes [us] . . . I too have served in an army [i.e. the Ottoman army] and carried out operations . . . And I say that there is in the [Israeli] army some overdoing it and. . . callousness. . . It is. . . possible to avoid needless forms of brutality, which are doing untold damage to our name.

Sharett pointed out that Toynbee had rebelled against his anti-Semitic father and 'had become a friend of the Jews'. But the `Arava incident might have changed that. Toynbee, said Sharett, had claimed that the soldiers responsible were Sephardim, 'who had suffered' at Arab hands.

Sharett went on to say:

> I am willing to justify the harshness of the measures that are required against the infiltrators, because this is crucial to the state. If this matter explodes [i.e. if there is a mass influx of infiltrating refugees], then it will destroy the security of the state and our personal safety. But there are things I am unwilling to explain and I do not think that it is justifiable to charge anyone with explaining them away. There is a limit, and the fact that we are a young state absorbing immigration is [an] inadequate [explanation/justification].

Supporting the policy of expelling infiltrators, Sharett strayed into a general statement of policy toward Israel's Arab minority (whose numbers were increasing through infiltration). He declared:

> If there is a possibility of reducing the Arab minority, if there is a possibility of prompting some [Arab] village or community, a certain number of Arabs, to leave the country, to send them on their way by peaceful means—this must be done . . . . If there is a possibility today of reducing the Arab minority, which numbers some 170,000, by one thousand—it should be done, but it depends on how one does it . . . . One must not strive to do this by a wholesale policy of repression [*negisha*] and discrimination. First of all, by such [means] the objective will be missed . . . . and they will turn the whole [Arab minority] into haters [of Israel] . . . . I say that we must adopt a dual policy, we must stand firm as a wall against infiltration and

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> not be deterred from using harsh measures, but at the same time we must understand that the Arabs who remain in Israel. . . must be assured a minimum.

Sharett had not really allowed himself to stray far from the defence establishment-Activist position. But the worldly foreign minister was keenly aware of Israel's diplomatic and 'image' needs abroad, and clearly regarded certain measures as unacceptable. That had been the case with both the Abu Ghosh and `Arava expulsions. A hairline crack had appeared between Sharett and the Activists.

Dayan, on the defensive, responded firmly to Sharett's implied and explicit criticisms. The 120 or so infiltrators pushed across the border in the `Arava, he said, were not innocents; they had crossed the line to steal from Jewish settlers, and theft could easily degenerate into murder.

Dayan went on to blame the quality of the IDF's new recruits, many from oriental Jewish backgrounds, for what had happened. 'The soldiers today, those soldiers who contrary to the orders of the captain knock over the can of water, [are] . . . Moroccan and Iraqi [Jews] who are [now] a large part of the [Israeli] public.' A group of thirty soldiers were currently on trial for raping and murdering an Arab woman, and a similar rape had occurred in Jaffa, he revealed. 'There are [in the IDF] Turkish and Moroccan [Jewish] soldiers', and they lack 'moral fibre'.

Dayan then turned to the core of the problem:

> Using the moral yardstick mentioned by [Sharett], I must ask: Are [we justified] in opening fire on the Arabs who cross [the border] to reap the crops they planted in our territory, they, their women and their children [?] Will this stand up to moral scrutiny . . . We shoot at those from among the 200,000 hungry Arabs who cross the line [to graze their flocks]—will this stand up to moral review? Arabs cross [the border] to collect the grain that they left in the abandoned villages and we set mines for them and they return without an arm or a leg. . . [It may be that this] cannot pass review, [but] I know no other method of guarding the borders. If the shepherds and harvesters are allowed to cross the borders, then tomorrow the State of Israel will have no borders.

The implication was clear: the IDF was waging a necessary, brutal war against the infiltrators, and, morally, the `Arava expulsion was not qualitatively different from many of the other measures adopted.

Dayan then gave his views on Israel's Arabs, whom he saw as a large, potential Fifth Column. Mapai should regard them

> as if their fate is not yet determined. I hope that there will perhaps be another opportunity in the future to transfer these Arabs from the Land of Israel, and as long as such a possibility exists, we must do nothing to foreclose the option . . . . It is possible that the moment a way of resettling the 700,000 [Palestinian] refugees is found, the same method will also prove good for the resettlement [outside Israel] of these Arabs [i.e. the Israeli Arab minority]. It is possible that when there is an

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> Arab state. . . which, with world agreement, is ready to resettle Arabs in other places, then that same agreement will be [extended] to the transfer of this [i.e. Israeli Arab] population as well.[157]

Dayan was far from alone in supporting the expulsion of Israel's post-1948 Arab minority. As the head of the Military Government, Lieutenant-Colonel Mor, put it in 1950, with probably only marginal exaggeration, 'the entire nation [i.e. Jews] in Zion [i.e. Israel], without exception, does not want Arab neighbours'.[158] IDF CGS Yadin at this time also implicitly supported the transfer of Israel's Arabs when, in a consultation with Ben-Gurion, on 8 February 1950, he described them as 'a danger in time of war, as in time of peace'. Yosef Weitz, director of the JNF's Lands Department, said that the government should encourage Arab families to leave by offering them compensation for their property.[159] Within a year, a project of this kind—a brainchild of Weitz's—was actually launched, and Israeli Christian Arab families were encouraged to move to South America, where many already had relatives. The scheme was actively supported by Israel's senior Cabinet ministers, including Sharett. Ben-Gurion, according to Weitz, called it 'a wonderful idea, and of great importance'.[160]

Dayan (and to a degree also Sharett) were taken to task a few weeks later, in the second stage of the Mapai leadership debate on 9 July 1950, when Mapai MK Yizhar Smilansky (the novelist 'S. Yizhar') decried the extraction of infiltrators' fingernails (Sharett interjected: 'This is a lie!') and the mortaring of Arab villages (see Chapter 6) because they were helping infiltrators. For Smilansky, anyone capable of doing such things to Arabs would be equally capable of doing them to Jews as well. 'One should not justify this [by arguing] that [these were] Jews from the Orient [and that they] hate the Arabs and know them.' Smilansky then defined the assumptions underlying Dayan's (and Sharett's) thinking: 'It is bad that Arabs remained [in Israel] . . . It were better that Arabs had not stayed.'

Moshe Dayan's father, Mapai MK Shmuel Dayan, a farmer from

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[157] Protocol of meeting of Mapai Knesset Faction and party secretariat, 18 June 1950, LPA 11-1-3.

[158] Protocol of Knesset Finance Committee meeting, 16 May 1950, HHA-ACP 95.10.13 (1).

[159] Weitz, *Yornani*, iv. 72, entry for 8 Feb. 1950.

[160] Ibid. iv. 164, 184, entries for 12 Nov. 1951, 5 Feb. 1952; U. Benziman and A. Mansour, *Dayarei Mishne* (Tel Aviv, 1992), 55-60. During the immediate post-1948 period, talk of 'transferring' Israel's Arab minority was relatively common in Israel. As Mapai Political Committee member Z. Aharonovich put it: 'For me, there is a solution to the Arab problem. The [Israeli] Arabs must move to those places to which the other Arabs [i.e. those already refugees] have moved. I was always a supporter of transfer' (protocol of meeting of Mapai Politbureau, 19 Jan. 1950, LPA 25/50 2).

Nahalal, spoke in defence of his son's position and took the moderates to task, charging that they were being inconsistent:

> What other way is there to prevent the hundreds of thousands of dispossessed [Palestinians] from returning, apart from force? . . . Maybe [not allowing the refugees back] is not right and not moral, but if we become just and moral, I do not know where we will end up. The question really is whether there is morality in war. It appears that there is not. We fought as do all peoples, we conquered and we took the [Arab] houses in Jaffa and Qatamon [a Jerusalem neighbourhood], and we have no intention of returning them. I myself belong to the universalist. [humanistic] school of thought and I am confused and I don't know what morality is [in this case] . . . My justification is that they [i.e. the Gentiles] killed us and can kill the Jews in Tunisia and in Morocco and perhaps in Romania and Hungary [so we must have a state and houses to which they can come for refuge]. My justification is that [otherwise] we do not have a state, we do not have a place in the world, they murdered us for two thousand years and now we have reached a [safe] place, they tell us—no.[161]

Mass round-ups of infiltrators in Israeli Arab towns and villages trailed off in the second half of 1950. Thereafter there were only occasional searches —usually based on tips from Arab informers—for individual infiltrators bent on resettling.

There are no accurate statistics for the whole period on the number of infiltrators caught and expelled. But partial figures show that by late April 1949, according to the deputy head of the Military Government, 'close to 2,000' infiltrators had been expelled by the IDF.[162] In 1952 the responsibility for rounding up and expelling infiltrators was shifted from the IDF/Military Government to the Israel Police. The police kept accurate statistics, according to which, in 1952, Israel expelled 3,181 infiltrators (mostly caught along the borders), 1,779 of them males. The numbers seem to have dropped significantly in 1953, when, during the first five months, Israel expelled 787 infiltrators.[163] Another 845 were expelled in 1954, of whom 114 were expelled in July, 96 in November, and 44 in December.[164] In 1955 more

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[161] Protocol of meetings of Mapai Knesset Faction and party secretariat, 18 June, 9 July 1950, LPA 11-1-3.

[162] Deputy OC Military Government to FM, 22 Apr. 1949, ISA FM 2570/10.

[163] Vardi to ?, 29 June 1953, ISA FM 2402/12. A somewhat contrary statistic—by the Police Special Branch—would seem to put the total of infiltrators expelled in 1953 even lower, at '864' for the whole twelve-month period. As there is no logical reason to believe that expulsions of infiltrators amounted to less than 100 for the whole of the last seven months of 1953, one of the two figures, '787' or '864', is probably wrong ('Infiltration—Report on the Problems of Infiltration into Israel—1954', Meir Novick, Israel Police Special Branch, June 1955, CZA S92-11).

[164] Ibid.; 'Infiltration—Monthly Report—July 1954', Israel Police Special Branch/Minorities Section, Aug. 1954, ISA FM 2402/12; 'Infiltration—Monthly Report—Dec. 1954', Israel Police Special Branch/Minorities Section, Jan. 1955, ISA FM 2591/18.

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than 300 were expelled,[165] and in January, February, and April 1956, another 64.[166] Throughout, some of the infiltrators were caught, and expelled, a number of times.

Atrocities

The IDF's shoot-to-kill orders, minings, expulsion operations, and retaliatory strikes (see Chapter 6), all, to one degree or another, involved state-authorized or, at least, permitted killing of unarmed civilians. Together, they reflected a pervasive attitude among the Israeli public that Arab life was cheap (or, alternatively, that only Jewish life was sacred).

Arab life, indeed, had become extremely cheap during the 1948 war, when Haganah, *IZL, LHI*, and IDF troops had committed many atrocities against civilians and prisoners. Almost all had gone unpunished. After the war, discipline in the IDF was tightened, and some atrocities were punished.[167] But the overall attitude, at least down to 1953, seemed to signal to the defence forces' rank and file that killing, torturing, beating, and raping Arab infiltrators was, if not permitted, at least not particularly reprehensible and might well go unpunished. Some sadistic troops, of the type which exists in every army, committed a series of atrocities, especially against captured infiltrators, between 1949 and 1953. Below I will describe some of the atrocities reported in the available documentation; presumably there were others that were never documented or are described only in still classified documents.

Apart from the 'conditioning' of both the 1948 war (which left Israelis with a sediment of hatred towards Arabs as well as a certain 'tradition' of dealing with Arab civilians) and the post-1948 anti-infiltration measures, the atrocities of 1949-53 benefited from a specific legal lacuna. Through 1949-56 Israel refused to treat infiltrators in accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Conventions of warfare. Israel maintained that it was not at war with the Arab states and that the infiltrators were not 'fighters' (despite the frequent Israeli political-propaganda claim of the time that the Arab states were organizing and using the infiltrators in a guerrilla war against Israel). The crucial ruling in the matter, given in March 1951 by the Israel Foreign Ministry's legal adviser, Shabtai Rosenne, and

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[165] Monthly reports on infiltration by Israel Police Special Branch, CZA S92-11.

[166] Ibid. Figures for the year's other months are unavailable.

[167] For some of the Jewish atrocities committed in 1948, see Morris, *Birth*, 102, 113-14, 118, 205-6, 222-3, 229-31. What and how many atrocities were punished, and what sort of penalties were meted out during 1949-56, can only be determined on the basis of IDF documentation. Unfortunately, IDFA was unable or unwilling to make this documentation available to me.

repeatedly upheld thereafter, pronounced that infiltrators were not protected by the Conventions because (*a*) neither Israel nor the Arab states had ratified them, and (*b*) Israel and the Arab states were not at war.[168]

Reports of Israeli atrocities began to appear in Israeli, UN, and Western documentation in mid-1949. One IDF intelligence officer reportedly said that 'hundreds' of infiltrators were caught daily in the villages of Western Galilee. 'The army detains them. They are checked. [And] many of them are [subsequently] liquidated by military order.' He had once seen a group of Arabs tied to trees, each with a bullet in the head, he said.[169] It is probable that the officer exaggerated when he spoke of 'hundreds' caught and 'many' executed daily in Western Galilee. But he accurately conveyed the feel of that chaotic period—with the more-or-less open borders, the continual, troublesome infiltration, and the brutal, occasionally sadistic IDF response, as the following examples make clear.

During the first years of the state, Israeli troops and police more or less routinely beat captured infiltrators, sometimes torturing them, and occasionally raped and/or murdered them. In a well-documented case, on the night of 19/20 (or 20/1) October 1950, soldiers led by the local military governor and his deputy, identified in the documentation as 'Ehrlich', raided several houses in the (mainly Christian) border village of Jish, in upper Galilee. Seven men were detained, stripped naked, tied up, and beaten on their feet for hours, 'according to the old Turkish method', and on other parts of their bodies. The seven, suspected of buying smuggled shoes, were later released without charges. Some suffered severe injuries.[170]

Less common than beatings were rape-murders. On 22 August 1949 Ben-Gurion noted in his diary: 'A shameful atrocity: Battalion 22 [Carmeli Brigade] in Beersheba found an Arab man and an Arab woman. They killed the Arab man. As to the woman, they (22 men) debated what to do. It was decided and carried out—they washed her, cut her hair, raped her and killed her.'[171]

Less than a year later, on 2 April 1950, Ben-Gurion recorded a similar atrocity in the Negev: 'Again our soldiers (Moroccans) caught two Arab girls, raped and murdered them. . . . The rapists are from Battalion 22, which is prone to such acts. [The IDF advocate-general] was ordered to

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[168] Rosenne to International Institutions Dept., Israel Foreign Ministry, 2 Mar. 1951, ISA FM 1987/2.

[169] ? to Y. Bar-Yehuda, 7 Aug. 1949, HHA-ACP 95.10.11 (3).

[170] 'The Jish, Gush Halav Affair', A. Ben-Shalom, 29 Oct. 1950, HHA-ACP 95.10.12 (6); 'Report on the Behaviour of the Military Government in the Arab Village of Jish (Gush Halav)', Ben-Shalom, undated (but from late 1950), HHA-ACP 95.10.12 (6); A. Cohen to the Mapam Knesset faction, 29 Oct. 1950, HHA-ACP 95.10.12 (5), including depositions by two Jish Arabs, Hana Ya`kub Jarasi and Ibrahim Haddad.

[171] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 22 Aug. 1949, BGA; protocol of meeting of Mapai Knesset faction and Mapai secretariat, statement by Gen. M. Dayan, 18 June 1950, LPA 11-1-3. Dayan told the Mapai leaders that some thirty soldiers were on trial for the crime.

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speed up the trials and demand severe punishment.'[172] Ben-Gurion was referring to two girls and a boy from the Gaza Strip village of `Abasan murdered by IDF troops around 16 March, whose bodies were found in Israel on 28 March. The incident enraged the villagers and sparked a cycle of violence. On 31 March, a party of Arabs, almost certainly from `Abasan, ambushed an IDF command car ten kilometres inside Israel, killing three soldiers and two civilians. Next day, the IDF mortared the village, wounding an Arab girl.[173]

In August 1950 four Israeli policemen raped a woman infiltrator, one Khadija Bint Suleiman Hussein, of the West Bank village of Qatanna, at the Abu Ghosh police station, where she was being held. She had been caught picking fruit in a grove, which may previously have been owned by her family. Jordan complained to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)[174], whose representative in Israel, Jean Munier, called for punishment of the culprits. At the same time, UNRWA investigated the case. The four policemen were tried by an internal disciplinary board and each sentenced to eighteen months in prison.[175] Subsequently, the IDF General Staff officer for the MACs, Lieutenant-Colonel Shaul Ramati, criticized UNWRA; condemned the ICRC for disseminating 'anti-Israel propaganda . . . on incidents which, however unpleasant, are over and done with'; and called for Munier's withdrawal.[176]

But the most common and serious atrocities involved the murder of captured infiltrators. In June 1949 Jordan accused the IDF of capturing four infiltrators on the Israeli side of the line near Qalqilya, taking them to the Arab side, and executing them.[177] In September, IDF troops in Ar

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[172] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 2 Apr. 1950, BGA.

[173] R. A. Gibson (Jerusalem) to SecState, 4 Apr. 1950, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 2; Gibson to State Dept., 4 Apr. 1950, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Egypt (conveying report by General Riley, chief of staff of UNTSO).

[174] `Azmi Nashashibi, Jordan Delegation to MAC, to ICRC Delegate, Jerusalem, 22 Aug. 1950, PRO FO 371-82207; 'Facts Received by Jordan Legation, London, from Jordan Government, Concerning Violations of Armistice Agreement', 14 Jan. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490. In his complaint to the Red Cross, Nashashibi wrote that

> for an Arab peasant woman living in a small village, known to every one of its inhabitants, to be attacked and raped by strangers, is a disgrace for life. The shame of it involves every member of her family and tribe. Furthermore, the victim will not, in all probability, be able to live any more in her own village, for fear of being killed by her husband or the nearest of kin, to bury the disgrace. . . . The victim is married, has two children, and is in the family way.

[175] J. Munier to Moshe Shilo, Israel liaison officer to the ICRC, 20 Dec. 1950, 'Confidential Report as a Neutral Interrogator on Frontier Incidents', Jean Gas, district inspector of UNRWA, Jerusalem, 17 Aug. 1950, both in ISA FM 1987/1; H. Dow (Jerusalem) to Furlonge, 29 Jan. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/7.

[176] Ramati to Shilo, 5 Feb. 1951, ISA FM 1987/2.

[177] Dayan to IDF Operations, etc., 30 June 1949, ISA FM 2431/5. Dayan wrote that there would be a UN investigation and recommended: 'Prepare the investigation [i.e. the Israeli witnesses] well.'

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Reina, near Nazareth, reportedly murdered fourteen Arabs, one of them a bedouin woman, suspected of smuggling. The troops apparently robbed their victims of hundreds of Israeli pounds.[178]

On 2 November 1950 three Arab children were shot, two of them fatally, by IDF troops near Deir Ayyub in the Latrun Salient. According to the subsequent Arab Legion report, whose main points were confirmed by UN observers, Ali Muhammad Ali Alayyan, aged 12, his sister Fakhriyeh Muhammad Ali Alayyan, aged 10, and their cousin Khadijeh Abd al Fattah Muhammad Ali, aged 8, all from Yalu village, had gone to gather wood near the demarcation line, some 400 metres inside Jordanian territory. An Israeli patrol came upon them, and Khadijeh began to run back to her village. The patrol opened fire and wounded her superficially in the thigh. As the children's father and uncle rushed to the scene, they saw the patrol dragging the brother and sister away to a spot south of Deir Ayyub, in no man's land. The two men looked on helplessly from a nearby hill. 'The two children were stood in the *wadi* bed, and soldiers opened fire at them. According to both [adult] witnesses . . . only one man fired at them, with a Sten gun; but none of the detachment attempted to interfere . . . . The soldiers [then] disappeared into the Israel area.' A few hours later the two villagers ventured down into the *wadi*, where the father found his 'boy dead, with two bullet holes in the head and one in his shoulder blade. The girl had four bullet wounds, three in her back and one in her neck, but she was still alive. I carded the girl and my brother carried the boy back to Yalu,' the father later testified. Fakhriyeh made a statement and then died early the next day at a Ramallah hospital.[179]

Unlike most Israeli atrocities, this one made waves, perhaps because the victims were children and because of the efficient manner in which the Jordanians publicized it. Most Israeli atrocities went unwitnessed by outsiders. In this case, there were eyewitnesses and (briefly) a survivor. The Jordanians compiled and distributed a dossier to British journalists and politicians. 'The dossier', wrote a member of the Israel Legation, London, 'was very good—in other words, we came out of it very badly.'[180] Questions were asked in the House of Commons. Israeli diplomats were

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[178] A[haron] C[ohen] to ? (possibly Mapam MKs), 29 Sept. 1949, HHA-ACP 95.10.12 (2). The story was related to Cohen by Aharon Haim Cohen, who added that the atmosphere prevailing in the army was epitomized in the words of one officer: 'Wherever I can kill an Arab—it is a pleasure. We left them [in 1948] in Reina—[and so] we lost their lands. We expelled them from Tzipori [i.e. Saffuriya]—[and] the lands there are [now] ours.' See also Haggai Uberal, IDF intelligence officer, Negev area, to Israel representative, IJMAC, 2 Mar. 1950, ISA FM 2431/7, for the murder, with '100 bullets', of a captured infiltrator in the South.

[179] 'The Deir Ayyub Murders', undated, Arab Legion HQ, in both ISA FM 2949/15 and PRO FO 371-82209; 'Facts Received by Jordan Legation', PRO FO 371-98490; de Ridder to Riley, 4 Nov. 1950, UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0-1.

[180] Kidron to M. S. Comay, FM, Tel Aviv, 8 Feb. 1951, ISA FM 2949/13.

uneasy with the automatic blanket denials of the whole affair by the British Zionist establishment. 'From everything I hear, the [Jordanian] story is true in its main points,' wrote a senior Israeli official to the director of the Mossad, Reuven Shiloah.[181] Kirkbride, the British minister in Amman, reported that 'public opinion [in Jordan] reacted strongly to this incident which has done much to harden the feelings against having anything to do with the Israelis'.[182] Israel promised the IJMAC that the soldier or soldiers responsible would be punished. The senior official complained that such incidents caused Israel 'a great deal of political and moral harm [abroad] . . . . They astonish and disappoint the Jewish public.' He recommended that Israel identify and punish those responsible. No one believed Israel's denials, he said.[183] According to Lieutenant-Colonel Ramati, an IDF corporal was subsequently tried for the crime.[184]

Jordan tried to exploit the incident to effect a change in Israel's treatment of infiltrators. It demanded that Israel 'cease to kill so-called infiltrators [who], in many cases, [are ignorant] of the. . . border line . . . . [And] not . . . shoot at children under any circumstances as a child can neither be a spy, nor a thief, nor a murderer . . . [and] not . . . molest or maltreat any woman'. The Jordanians also demanded that Israel pay 'blood money. . . at the recognised rate of 250 sterling per person' to the parents of the murdered children.[185] But, despite the bad publicity, the Deir `Ayyub murders did little to modify IDF policy towards infiltrators. Ramati continued to speak of 'the desirability of killing the maximum number of Arabs who cross into our area'.[186]

Normally, the Israeli authorities proved able to whitewash or cover up such incidents (if word of them leaked out), at least to the satisfaction of the Israeli public and American Jewry. Thus, in late July 1949, five infiltrators were intercepted by the police near the town of Hadera. According to a report which later reached Mapam activists, they were captured and taken to an empty house, where four were 'cold-bloodedly killed' by a police officer. The fifth infiltrator was saved when one of the policemen interceded and said: 'This is our informer.' Subsequently, the Israeli press ran a story telling of a 'skirmish' between a band of four armed infiltrators and police, in which the four died.[187]

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[181] Comay to Shiloah, 27 Dec. 1950, ISA FM 2949/13.

[182] Kirkbride to FO, 1 Dec. 1950, PRO FO 371-82703 ET1013/12.

[183] Comay to Shiloah, 27 Dec. 1950, ISA FM 2949/13.

[184] Ramati to Shilo, 4 Feb. 1951, ISA FM 1987/2.

[185] Nashashibi to chairman and members of IJMAC, 27 Nov. 1950, ISA FM 2431/8.

[186] 'Informal MAC Meeting Held at Muntar al Joza on the 24th May, 1951', Ramati to Makleff, etc., undated, ISA FM 2949/13.

[187] Unsigned cable to Aharon Cohen, 7 Aug. 1949, HHA-ACP 95.10.12 (2); *HaAretz*, 31 July 1949.

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Usually, news of atrocities did not reach the press, in any fashion. In early April 1951 soldiers captured and murdered two infiltrators, Issa Muhammad Salim Abu Asabeh, 62, and Hussayn Muhammad Janazar, 18, both of Halhul, who, according to Arab witnesses, were 'gathering grass' 500 metres inside Israeli territory. The older man's body was subsequently exhumed by UN investigators and found to have been hit by 15 Sten-gun rounds. His 'male organ had been removed', his buttocks had been skinned, and he had bayonet wounds in his left side. The Arab Legion drily remarked that this went 'far beyond the punishment due to a peaceful infiltrator'.[188]

The following year, on 13 January 1952, a nine-man IDF patrol seized two Arab villagers, Abdullah Ahmad Dagash and Ibrahim Khalil, in a field 300 metres inside Jordan, near Cremisan, and led them back into Israel. Two of the soldiers then murdered the Arabs in a house in the abandoned village of Walaj a. The two Israelis subsequently told UN investigators that the 'infiltrators' had been killed inside Israeli territory when they had jumped out from behind a rock. The UN men and Jordanian cross-examiners were unable to shake the Israelis' testimony. The Israel MAC delegate, Major Shmuel Nutuv, who knew the facts, privately averred that the patrol had not been acting under orders and that 'the Jordanians guess the truth but are unsure about it.'[189]

A similar atrocity occurred five days later when an IDF patrol seized three villagers from Battir working in a vegetable plot on the Israeli side of the border which Israel permitted them to cultivate under a longstanding arrangement. The three were marched a few hundred metres further into Israel and gunned down at point-blank range. The next day the same patrol seized two more Battir villagers and murdered them. The patrol leader later told UN observers that he had killed the two in the second incident 'because he was frightened and anyway they might have run away'.[190]

A year later a similar atrocity occurred at A1 Burj, when on 25 February 1953 an IDF patrol shot dead and mutilated five Arab shepherds, the

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[188] 'Murder and Mutilation by Israel Troops', Arab Legion report sent by US Legation in Amman to State Dept. on 26 Apr. 1951, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[189] 'The Investigation of the Jordanian Complaint about the Killing of two Arabs near the Village of Walaja on 13.1.52', Nutuv to the IDF General Staff officer for MACs, etc., 22 Jan. 1952, ISA FM 2432/1; Drew to State Dept. 17 Jan. 1952, enclosing untitled Arab Legion report by G. C. Hutson, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[190] J. Waldo to S. K. C. Kopper, 21 Jan. 1952, NA RG 59, Dept., LM 60, Roll 1; Drew to SecState, 21 Jan. 1952, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 2; Tyler to SecState, 22 Jan. 1952, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2. Later that year an Arab MK, Tewfiq Toubi, submitted a parliamentary question about the execution-style murder and swift, secret burial in April in a Muslim cemetery in Nazareth of two unidentified Arabs. The two, suspected of smuggling, were allegedly murdered by Israeli policemen or customs officers (*Divrei HaKnesset*, 12/2 (21 July 1952), 2640).

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youngest of them aged 13. It is not clear whether the shepherds, with their flock, had been caught in Israeli territory or, as the Arab Legion subsequently alleged, had been detained on the Jordanian side of the border and hauled into Israel before being shot. Richard Parker, an Americal vice-consul in Jerusalem, remarked that, while the shooting of infiltrators was still a daily affair, 'this particular incident seems to have a rather unusual quality of brutality about it'. The shepherds' flock of 177 sheep was confiscated by the Israelis.[191] According to the Arab Legion, three days later, on 28 February, an IDF patrol intercepted on Israeli territory near Beit Jibrin (Beit Govrin) a group of Arab smugglers, on their way from Gaza to the Hebron Hills, and murdered five of them. Each had been shot in the head.[192]

There is almost no mention of atrocities after 1953, though it is possible that some still classified documents contain information about additional atrocities. It would appear that, as IDF discipline increased, the number of atrocities dramatically decreased. It is also likely that the transfer of jurisdiction over much of the border from the IDF to the Israel police in 1953-4 contributed to the decrease.

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[191] R. Parker to State Dept., 3 Mar. 1953; J. Green (Amman) to SecState, 2 Mar. 1953; Green to State Dept., 3 Mar. 1953, all in NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2. *Jerusalem Post* of 3 Mar. described the story as Arab 'propaganda', and suggested that one of the shepherds had been armed.

[192] 'Crimes of Violence in Israel', Arab Legion, 12 Apr. 1953, in NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2. The Legion—meaning Glubb—maintained that the Jews, in their 2,000 years of dispersion, had acquired an ingrained antipathy to 'Gentile law and order' and had become a lawless race, and this had 'been transferred to the institutions of their own State. . . . The lawlessness of Israel is thus deep-rooted.'

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6
The Beginning of the Retaliatory Policy

The Philosophy of Retaliation

In addition to defensive measures, Israel adopted a retaliatory policy in its effort to combat infiltration. The policy emerged immediately after the signing of the armistice agreements, in response to specific attacks by Arab infiltrators. To a lesser extent, retaliatory strikes were launched in response to anti-Israeli actions by the regular forces of the Arab states.

The philosophy behind the policy, with its mix of *revenge, punishment*, and *deterrence*, was anchored in mainstream Yishuv thinking dating back to the 1920s. The state's policy during 1949-56 was a natural successor to Haganah retaliatory policy in British Mandate days (as, one might say, Sharett's advocated policy of restraint was a carry-over from the Yishuv's sometime 1930s policy of *havlaga* (restraint)). Through most of the 1930s and 1940s the Haganah (and, at times, the *IZL* (*Irgun Zva`i Le`umi* or *Irgun*) and *LHI* (*Lohamei Herut Yisrael* or Stem Gang) as well) responded to Arab terrorism with counter-terrorist operations. Often, the aim was to hit back at the perpetrators—or at their families, clans, tribes, or villages. When a Jewish girl was raped in the Beit Shean Valley, a Palmah squad abducted and castrated the suspected Arab rapist; when Jews were killed in an ambush in Petah Tikva, a grenade was thrown into a coffee-shop in the neighbouring Arab village of Fajja. The aim was to take revenge, punish the perpetrators (or their kin), and deter them (and other Arabs) from further attacks on Jews.

Essentially, the retaliatory policy was no doubt rooted in the age-old human drive to avenge offences and punish offenders.[1] As Prime Minister Sharett—who normally urged and tried to practise restraint—put it, after infiltrators had murdered two Israeli watchmen at `Ajjur in January 1955: 'The [Israeli public's and army's] rage must be defused. That alone is the logic, none other [in launching retaliatory strikes]. I do not believe that

[1] Ben-Gurion's adviser, Y. Palmon, stated, simply, that the policy was based on the principle of 'an eye for an eye' ('The Situation on the Israeli-Jordanian Borders and Proposals for its Improvement', Palmon, undated but with covering note B. Yekutieli to prime minister's secretary, etc., 25 Feb. 1954, ISA PMO 5433/23). A letter Ben-Gurion received from a 70-year-old Jerusalem tailor, Nissim Amiel, apparently following the IDF reprisal raid at Ar Rahwa, on 11/12 September 1956, is indicative: 'I wanted to visit you and kiss your hands and thank you for avenging Jewish blood within twenty-four hours [of the murder of a Jew by Arabs]' (Amiel to Ben-Gurion, 9 Sept. (*sic*), 1956, BGA).

the reprisal will help in any way in terms of [improving] security. On the contrary . . .,[2] Two months later, after the IDF raid on Gaza, Sharett noted in his diary:

> We have taken off the psychological and ethical brakes on this [revenge] instinct [*yetzer*], which is embedded, for ill, in human nature, and have thus permitted and enabled the Paratroop Battalion to turn the matter of revenge into a moral principle . . . . [The principle of revenge] has been sanctified in this battalion, which has become the State's collective tool of revenge.[3]

The desire to take revenge after a particularly horrendous infiltrator attack was common to both the decision-makers and the IDF's operational echelon. Nor was it always connected with a particular infiltrator attack. Mordechai Gur, who commanded the IDF paratroop battalion's D Company (and became IDF CGS in the 1970s), recorded a meeting in December 1953 about a planned retaliatory strike against the Hebron Hills village of Surif:

> The village. . . triggered powerful latent feelings in all of us. This was the village near which the thirty-five fighters [i.e. the thirty-five Palmah soldiers killed by Arab villagers on their way to reinforce the nearby beseiged Etzion Bloc of settlements in January 1948] were murdered . . .

Learning that the operation had been cancelled, Gur wrote: 'Alas. The opportunity to retaliate for the thirty-five as well has slipped through our fingers.'[4]

But generally, the revenge element in each retaliatory strike was linked to a specific, very recent, terrorist attack or series of attacks. In the Knesset debate on the massacre by Arab infiltrators of eleven Israeli passengers in a civilian bus at Scorpions Pass (Ma`ale `Akrabim), in the Negev, in March 1954, Minister of Commerce and Industry Peretz Bernstein, responding for the government, stated flatly that 'the response [i.e. reprisal raid] as understood until now is an act of revenge [*ma`ase nekama*]'. Retaliation, he implied, was not (usually) an act of specific *punishment*, such that would have entailed hitting the actual perpetrators, something that was usually impossible to arrange.[5]

Though the Yishuv suffered from Arab terrorism both before and after 1948, there was a vast difference between the two periods. In Mandate days, the attacks came usually from neighbouring Arabs, whose identities were

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[2] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 673, 670, entries for 18 Jan. 1955.

[3] Ibid. iii, 840, entry for 13 Mar. 1955. Sharett added that the battalion might become a 'plague' (*ra`a hola*) and might have to be disbanded.

[4] Gur, *Pleuga Dalet*, 123, 128. Dayan repeatedly denied that 'revenge' was behind the retaliatory policy (see, e.g., Dayan, 'Pe`ulot Tzvai`yot BiYemei Shalom', lecture to officers, 1955: and Teveth, *Dayan*, 431). So did P. Lavon (*`Al `Arachim U`Nechasim* (Tel Aviv, 1986), 122, text of a speech before IDF officers, 31 May 1954).

[5] *Divrei HaKnesset*, 15/2 (24 Mar. 1954), 1318.

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known. Punishment was normally meted out by the British authorities. The Jewish militia organizations took the law into their own hands when the British failed to punish, or to punish promptly and sufficiently, or when the Yishuv saw the crime as extremely provocative and serious. Usually, the Jews knew the perpetrators and could single them (or, at least, their clan or village) out, and punish them.

In the post-1948 Middle East, when Arab infiltrators crossed the border and robbed or murdered Israelis, the relevant Arab government often failed to intervene and punish the perpetrators. Usually, too, the Israeli authorities were ignorant of the identity and exact location of the perpetrators, who lived in another (and hostile) country. The feeling in Tel Aviv was that the authorities in Jordan and Egypt could not be relied upon to punish infiltrators (or punish them sufficiently). What Arab could be expected, without coercion, to punish an Arab farmer who had stolen Israeli sheep or killed a Jew? The Israeli, after all, was the enemy both of the Arab border farmer and refugee and of the Arab officer, policeman, and regime. If Jews did not mete out punishment to infiltrators, there would be no punishment at all.

But punishment of the actual perpetrators was usually impossible. Often, they were unknown or inaccessible. By 1951-2 the IDF had reached the conclusion that punishment was best left to the Arab governments, primarily Jordan and Egypt. But, since the Arab authorities were not naturally motivated to punish fellow Arabs for hurting Jews, they would have to be compelled to do so. And the only way to compel them to curb infiltration and to punish infiltrators was by hurting them enough to persuade them that it was in their interest to do so.[6] This amounted to a strategy of *indirect deterrence*—and, as seen from Jerusalem, a legitimate form of 'self-defence'.[7] In the pre-state days, too, the aim of Haganah reprisals had been both to take *revenge* and to *punish* the Arab perpetrators or those close to them, and to *deter* the perpetrators and others from further such attacks. But, usually, the pre-1948 reprisals were against actual terrorists or those close to them, and the deterrence achieved or sought was *direct*; the aim was not (usually) to persuade the British to act, for they normally did so without much prodding.

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[6] Critics of Yishuv retaliatory policy often charged that the Jewish leadership—before and after 1948—believed that the only language Arabs understood was force, and that the Arabs regarded Israeli restraint as a sign of weakness. As the British minister in Amman, A. S. Kirkbride, put it: 'The Jewish authorities . . . always preached the doctrine that the only way to control Arabs was by the utterly ruthless exercise of force' (Kirkbride to G. W. Furlonge, FO, 24 June 1950, PRO FO 371-82205). In unguarded moments, Israeli officials sometimes said as much to Western diplomats: 'the Arabs . . . understand only force' (W. P. Chase (Jerusalem) to State Dept., 17 Mar. 1955, NA RG 59, 684a.86/3-1755, Box 2691).

[7] British Embassy, Tel Aviv, to Levant Dept., FO, 14 Feb. 1955, PRO FO 371-115837 VR 1072/13.

But after 1948, and particularly from 1951 on, the retaliatory policy aimed at achieving *indirect deterrence*. Whenever an infiltrator squad from the West Bank crossed into Israel and killed a farmer, an IDF squad would cross into the West Bank, blow up several houses, and kill a handful of Palestinians. The IDF would act as soon as possible after the terrorist attack and usually in the immediate cross-border vicinity, to bring home to the local population and the authorities that Israel was responding to that specific attack. The Arab villagers, smarting from the IDF assault, would oust the infiltrators or hand them or their names to the Jordanian authorities for punishment. Would-be infiltrators would be barred from using the village as a way-station or base. An attack on one village could also be expected to deter its neighhours. IDF pressure would thus result in local pressure on the authorities to do something about infiltration in the area.[8]

In turn, local- and national-level Arab officials and officers would smart under the IDF attack, but would resist the temptation to strike back at Israel for fear that this would provoke still greater retaliation. A major clash with Israel, possibly leading to war, had to be avoided, since it was well understood on both sides of the line that the IDF was stronger than even the combined Arab armies. This being so, it was reasoned in Israel, local and national Arab officials would eventually feel compelled, even against their will, to clamp down on infiltration and punish the infiltrators.

Following the relative failure of IDF raids in 1949-51 actually to 'hit' the perpetrators of terrorist attacks, Israel shifted the focus to collective targets: the attackers' clan, village, or district, usually striking soon after the original attack. In effect, the element of punishment was thus superceded by the element of deterrence.

Dayan later spelt out the philosophy involved: Israeli could not rely solely on defensive measures; the army and police could not guard every Israeli settler, 'water pipe . . . and tree', house and farm animal. But the army

> had the power to set a [high] price on our blood, [a price] that no Arab village, army, or government would feel was worth paying. We could make sure that instead of aiding the gangs [i.e. infiltrators], the Arab villages would resist their passing through; [we could ensure] that Arab army commanders would prefer meticulously to carry out their commitments to guard the border [against infiltration] rather than fail in a clash with our units, and that the Arab governments would desist from confrontation with Israel, which would [quickly] highlight their weakness.[9]

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[8] Sharett defined this as 'energizing the [Arab] government to take action' ('Protocol of a Meeting at the Foreign Ministry on 2.2.1953', ISA FM 4373/15).

[9] Dayan, 'Pe`ulot Tzvai`yot BiYemei Shalom', 1955.

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Dayan had already worked out and enunciated both the local- and national-level logic of retaliation in mid-1950:

> The only method that proved effective, not justified or moral but effective, when Arabs plant mines on our side [is retaliation]. If we try to search for that [particular] Arab [who planted mines], it has no value. But if we harass the nearby village . . . then the population there comes out against the [infiltrators] . . . and the Egyptian Government and the Transjordanian government are [driven] to prevent such incidents, because their prestige is [assailed], as the Jews have opened fire, and they [i.e. the Arab governments] are unready to begin a war . . . The method of collective punishment so far has proved effective . . . There are no other effective methods [to counter infiltration].[10]

Yet through 1949-53 Israel almost invariably dissociated itself from the reprisals. Government and IDF spokesmen normally pleaded ignorance or attributed the attacks to unidentified vigilante border settlers. This posture culminated in Ben-Gurion's radio statement after Qibya denying that any IDF unit had taken part.

But Israeli leaders believed that, despite these denials, the reprisals had an undiminished deterrent value: Arabs who believed the raids were the work of border settlers would still be deterred. And, after an initial flirt with the 'vigilante' concept,[11] most Arab military and political leaders, and Western officials, concluded that the raids were, indeed, the work of the IDF acting on government instructions.

Western observers generally cited two aspects of the retaliatory policy as morally objectionable: the raids made 'innocent Arabs suffer for the acts of guilty Arabs';[12] and they were disproportionate to the initial Arab terrorist attack or attacks.[13]

Pro-retaliation Activists in Tel Aviv countered that Israel could not retaliate after each terrorist attack, and normally took action only after a series of attacks. Hence, a retaliatory strike which killed, say, ten or twenty Arab soldiers was not quite so disproportionate as it often seemed. Moreover, it was usually impossible to determine in advance how many Arabs would be killed. As Ben-Gurion explained in December 1955, a large proportion of those killed were often not from the targeted units but from among the Arab reinforcements sent to the scene of the attacks.[14]

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[10] Dayan statement at meeting of Mapai Knesset faction and party Secretariat, 18 June 1950, LPA 11-1-3.

[11] See, e.g., 'Minutes of Meeting Held at HQ 1 Division [Arab Legion] on 5 June 1950', Lt.-Col. W. A. Salmon, PRO FO 371-82204.

[12] Minute, P. H. Laurence, 13 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115905 VR1092/327.

[13] p. Eliav to G. Rafael, 18 Oct. 1956, ISA FM 2949/4; C. B. Duke (Amman) to Shuckburgh, FO, 10 Aug. 1954, PRO FO 371-111073 VR1072/175, in which the British minister in Amman stated: 'There is a great difference between the scale and nature of the incidents for which Jordan and Israel have respectively been responsible'.

[14] Ben-Gurion to Eban, 19 Dec. 1955, BGA.

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As the years passed and the retaliatory strikes proved relatively ineffective in curbing terroristic infiltration, the Israeli defence establishment increasingly fell back on one major, probably true, but unprovable argument: that, but for the retaliatory raids, infiltration might have reached catastrophic proportions. In October 1954 Dayan asserted that, in the absence of reprisals,

> the situation would be many times worse . . . The Arabs surrounding us are consumed by such a degree of hatred, and the refugee camps contain such explosive power, that only energetic reprisals . . . dammed the flood of disorder that would have engulfed the border regions and brought about the collapse of security in the country.[15]

Ben-Gurion gave the argument a judicial twist:

> Punishment of murderers as accepted in all countries does not prevent acts of murder. But were no murderer punished—the reins would be loosed and masses of people would be murdered. Punishment deters—though not everyone . . . Retaliation does not completely halt [infiltrator] attacks—but it deters many, like all punishment. And who knows how many lives have been saved by these reprisals.[16]

From the Israeli perspective, the retaliatory policy was also a matter of *strategic deterrence* against the possibility that the Arabs would launch a Second Round against Israel the moment they felt capable of winning. The retaliatory strikes, especially the larger ones of 1953-6, were in part designed to drive home the message—in recurrent, humiliating fashion— of Israel's military superiority. The raids underlined to the Arab public— lest they had forgotten the military disasters of 1948—their military weakness. Or, as Dayan put it:

> The retaliatory strikes compelled the Arabs to ask themselves from time to time: is the destruction of Israel a realistic programme, or a plan [whose fulfilment] one should despair of? . . . [Moreover,] the . . . clashes in the 'border war' would determine how the Israeli soldier was perceived by the Arab public and military,

which, in turn, would affect the Arab soldier's fighting spirit and the Arab public's morale in wartime.[17] The retaliatory strikes thus helped prevent the outbreak of (Arab-initiated) war.

Paradoxically, from some point in 1954, the retaliatory strikes were also designed with a directly contrary purpose, at least as seen by the new IDF CGS, Dayan—and that was to help prod this or that Arab state into a premature war with Israel. Dayan wanted war, and, periodically, he hoped

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[15] Sharett to Elath, Eban, and Shiloah, 26 Oct. 1954 (in *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 595). See also ibid. iv. 1001, entry for 17 May 1955.

[16] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 28 Sept. 1956, BGA.

[17] Dayan, 'Pe`ulot Tzvai`yot BiYemei Shalom', 1955.

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that a given retaliatory strike would embarrass or provoke the Arab state attacked into itself retaliating, giving Israel cause to escalate the shooting until war resulted—a war in which Israel could realize such major strategic objectives as the conquest of the West Bank or Sinai, or the destruction of the Egyptian army. Such, certainly, was the main motive behind the IDF strikes against Egypt in October-November 1955 at Kuntilla and the Sabha, and against Syria, in December 1955.[18]

To these basic underpinnings of the retaliatory policy must be added several further factors:

1. *Israeli public opinion*. The Israeli public, always highly sensitive to (Jewish) loss of life, had from time to time to be mollified by demonstrations that the government and IDF would protect and avenge them after terrorist outrages. In April 1955, for example, after infiltrators had blown up a house in Zecharya, south-west of Jerusalem, Ben-Gurion, then the defence minister, demanded a retaliatory strike: 'It will give encouragement [to the citizenry] before the Independence Day [celebrations].' Golda Meir added: 'The public has fallen into an insufferable depression'[19] The reprisals were clearly viewed by their architects as an 'instrument . . . that strengthens the Yishuv's morale'.[20]

Recurrently during the 1950s, Israeli Cabinet ministers and MKs voiced the fear that, in the absence of IDF reprisals, Israelis might take the law into their own hands and strike back at Arab villages across the border in acts of vigilantism.[21] Voicing this fear in itself acted as a kind of spur to the defence establishment to embark on retaliatory strikes. No doubt this fear was in some measure reinforced by the government's repeated (spurious) attribution of retaliatory strikes to 'angry border settlers'. Vigilantism was continually in the air, if not very much evident in practice. Sharett himself used the vigilantism argument to defend the government's retaliatory policy when it was attacked by Foreign Ministry officials in mid-1955. The recent acts of revenge by settlers from Mevo Beitar and by Meir Har-Zion and his friends, said Sharett, 'bore witness to what would happen' should the government abjure reprisals.[22] Ben-Gurion appeared particularly concerned by the possibility of vigilantism by the North African and Asian Jewish settlers in the *moshavim*. On 3 November 1955 he told the Knesset:

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[18] Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 68-70, 83.

[19] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 950, entry for 20 Apr. 1955.

[20] Lavon, *`Al `Arachim U`Nechasim*, 121-3.

[21] e.g. Herut MK Arye Altman in Jan. 1955 tabled a motion for the Knesset agenda bluntly warning that, if the government failed to protect the country's citizenry, there would be 'private initiatives' (*Divrei HaKnesset*, 17/2, (25 Jan. 1955), 654-6).

[22] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1025, entry for 28 May 1955.

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> Through the IDF retaliatory strikes, the Israeli authorities have curbed the injured border settlers from taking the law into their own hands and from carrying out revenge attacks across the border. Thousands of these settlers come from the East, where the people are educated in the *Kom*—the custom of revenge through 'an eye for an eye'—and revenge attacks by them could have turned into a wild spree and bloodbath among innocent civilians on both sides of the border.[23]

Internal political calculation also played its part. The ruling Mapai Party leadership understood that failure to retaliate might carry a high political price. Israelis, especially the new immigrants from Arab lands who lived in border communities and development towns, might turn to Menachem Begin's Herut Party, which consistently urged a more militant policy against the Arabs. Sharett 'clearly hinted' as much in September 1954, in justifying the raid on Beit Liqya to Russell, the American *chargé d'affaires* in Tel Aviv. The IDF had struck 'to forestall [an] increase of pro-Herut sentiment', reported Russell.[24] Internal political considerations became even more important during the run-up to general elections. Thus, some two months before the July 1955 elections, Mapai's ministers reviewed the retaliatory policy. Sharett *tangled* with Dayan (who for some reason was also present) and Ben-Gurion, but was left in a minority of one. He later noted in his diary: 'I knew well what they were all thinking—though no one put it into words—that to do nothing at this time would be a mortal blow for us in the elections and would send thousands of voters to [Herut] and [Ahdut Ha`Avoda, the Activist socialist party].[25]

2. *The border settlements*. Particularly sensitive to infiltrator attacks were the Israeli border settlements. Their morale plummeted when attacked and soared—or so Israeli officials claimed—when the IDF retaliated. Occasionally, the settlements lobbied the government to take action (though, normally, they called for increased *defensive* measures— more perimeter fencing and lighting, more IDF patrols and ambushes— rather than for cross-border reprisals). Israeli officials and IDF officers often assumed (or professed to believe) that reprisals were what the border settlers wanted and needed.[26] The officials—especially those connected

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[23] Quoted in M. Tuval to Y. Tekoah, undated, ISA FM 2949/4.

[24] F. Russell to State Dept., 10 Sept. 1954, *FRUS*, 9/1, 1652.

[25] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1001, entry for 17 May 1955. See also S. Aaronson and D. Horowitz, 'HaIstrategia shel Tagmul Mevukar-HaDugma HaYisraelit', *Medina U`Memshal*, 1/1 (summer 1971), 80-1, 96. After the elections, in which Mapai's representation in the Knesset dropped from 45 to 40, Ben-Gurion charged that the loss of votes had been due to Sharett's policy of restraint (M. Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion* (Tel Aviv, 1975), iii. 1144).

[26] Sharett told FM officials that the IDF raids 'raised the morale' of the border settlers (see 'Protocol of a Meeting at the Foreign Ministry on 2.2. 1953', ISA FM 4373/15). A year later Sharett said that, if murders by infiltrators
pass without [Israeli] response, [the border settlers] feel that the army and the government are indifferent and this undermines their morale, whereas if they see that [the army] is

(Footnote continued on next page)

with the agricultural and settlement sectors—were particularly fearful that continued infiltrator attacks would undermine morale and precipitate individual or mass flight. Retaliatory strikes were seen by the leadership as a means of persuading the settlers that the government 'really cared' and would protect them, or at least avenge their losses.[27]

3. *IDF morale*. As with the border settlers, the morale of the soldiers was believed to be particularly vulnerable to infiltrator depredations. Failure to respond to a particular terrorist attack was seen by politicians and generals as harmful to IDF morale.[28] Soldiers asked: 'What are we here for? Why aren't we retaliating?' From time to time, the troops—especially the middle-echelon officers in the élite units—had to be thrown a bone; they were forever (especially in Unit 101 and the Paratroop Battalion/Brigade) straining at the leash. It was not only a matter of vengeance, punishment, and deterrence; the officers wanted to demonstrate their own and their units' mettle.

4. *IDF training and 'body-building'*. Dayan and his protégés saw the retaliatory policy as a useful and necessary part of the training of the IDF. The best training was real combat and the IDF has to be hardened and readied for that Second Round for which most Israelis believed the Arabs were preparing. According to Dayan, the retaliatory strikes inculcated two specific military values, leadership and command behaviour, and standards of combat, which included perseverence in carrying out missions, whatever the difficulties. Dayan believed that in 1948 the IDF had demonstrated reasonably high defensive capabilities and behaviour, but had fallen short on the offensive. This was corrected during the years of retaliation. While

(Footnote continued from previous page)

fighting—that strengthens them. . . . There is here a drift of public opinion that is irresistible and a government that wishes to control things cannot ignore it ('A Precis of the Statement by the Foreign Minister at a Consultation in the Foreign Ministry on 12.4.54.', 30 Aug. 1954, ISA FM 2448/15).
Sharett's views were echoed by other senior officials (see, e.g., Y. Herzog to A. Harman, 22 Apr. 1954, ISA FM 2429/6 bet).

[27] 'Infiltration—Annual Summary 1952' (Israel Police Special Branch/Section for Combating Infiltration, undated but with covering note, A. (or E.) Katznelenbogen to IDF General Staff/Operations, 3 Mar. 1953, ISA FM 2402/12), says that 'the retaliatory strikes carried out by the IDF against the villages from which infiltrators sortied into [the Jerusalem Corridor] restored the [border settlers'] confidence'.

[28] Sharett: 'the army [felt that] it had to do something after it saw the State being ridiculed and mocked' ('Protocol of a Meeting at the Foreign Ministry on 2.2.1953', ISA FM 4373/15). But Sharett was not usually sympathetic towards the argument of IDF morale. He often distinguished between civilian and army morale and needs. Whereas the civilian settlers' morale had, on occasion, to be sustained by retaliatory strikes, the government, in this respect, could and should ignore the army: 'It is inconceivable that the army be allowed to carry out needless actions only to strengthen its morale. The army must be disciplined . . . even when it does nothing'. ('A Precis of the Statement by the Foreign Minister at a Consultation in the Foreign Ministry on 12.4.54', 30 Aug. 1954, ISA FM 2448/15; Sharett at meeting of Jewish Agency Executive, 13 Apr. 1954, CZA S100-92).

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the strikes themselves were mostly carried out by élite units, the example shown 'irradiated' the entire IDF and, particularly, its combat units.[29]

In mid-1955 Dayan, drawing together the various strands of his thinking on the retaliatory policy, defined the reprisals as a 'life-giving drug' for the nation as a whole: 'Without them we will not have a fighting people and without the regimen of a fighting people we are lost.'[30] Israel, it was implied, could exist only as a garrison state, a modern Sparta.

Over the years, a variety of misconceptions emerged in Arab and Western capitals about the motives behind the retaliatory strikes. Foreign observers frequently assessed this or that reprisal as designed to compel the Arab states to negotiate peace. As one British official put it in 1953, after the series of IDF raids that summer, the retaliatory policy was designed to persuade the Jordanians to control infiltration 'and to induce them to enter into high-level talks' on border pacification or peace.[31] Glubb certainly believed this. As he cabled the Arab Legion liaison office in London in 1953: 'Assuming Israel has been deliberately creating . . . incidents . . . one of two objects seems probable. (*A*) Israel wants war with Jordan. (*B*) Israel wants [to] terrorize Jordan into suing for peace . . . . Alternative (*B*) seems possibly more likely.'[32] He put it more strongly a year later. Israeli military pressure on Jordan 'is designed to achieve peace and trade as a preliminary step towards the strengthening, consolidation and expansion of Israel'.[33]

In a variation on this theme, some Arab spokesmen claimed that the IDF strikes were designed to prompt the Great Powers to impose a peace settlement in the Middle East.[34]

I have found no evidence to suggest that Israel, through the early and mid-1950s, ever directly used reprisals to compel the Arabs to discuss or move towards peace (or to persuade the Western governments to compel

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[29] 'MiShalav el Shalav', Gen. Dayan. In a revised version of his lecture 'Pe`ulot Tzvai`yot BiYemei Shalom', which appeared in *Ma`arachot* (May 1959), Dayan said that the retaliatory strikes had contributed to 'the consolidation' of the IDF's and the Israeli public's self-confidence and consciousness of strength. These, in turn, had contributed to the victory in Sinai in 1956. See also Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 258.

[30] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1021, entry for 26 May 1955.

[31] 'Israel-Jordan Border Incidents', P.S. Falla, 17 Aug. 1953, PRO FO 371-104787 ER1091/318. See also 'Office Memorandum', Allen to S. P. Dorsey and W. C. Burdett, 16 Apr. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5,684a.8614-1654, which speaks of 'a policy of aggression ("retaliatory attacks") designed to force the Arabs to negotiate a general peace settlement'.

[32] Glubb (Amman) to Melville, 20 Nov. 1953, PRO FO 371-104791.

[33] 'Jordan's National Guard. Introduction', Arab Legion HQ, 11 July 1954, PRO FO 371-110925.

[34] See, e.g., 'Appendix to Precis No. 1198, Nashashibi on the Infiltration and the Infiltrators', unsigned but probably by Foreign Ministry Research Dept., 8 Nov. 1953, ISA 2402/12.

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the Arabs to do so). In the mid-1950s Dayan certainly viewed retaliation as a means of gradually forcing the Arab world to recognize Israel's existence and power, and, hence, slowly to bring about its acquiesence in Israel's existence. But I have seen no evidence pointing to Israel's use of specific retaliatory strikes to prompt a particular Arab government to begin to negotiate or make peace with Israel. Ben-Gurion was probably sincere when he wrote: 'We have no intention of using border clashes for any political purpose—[they are aimed] only at putting an end to the acts of murder [by Arabs] . . .,[35] Indeed, Arab leaders and Western diplomats often said—perhaps with varying degrees of sincerity—that the reprisal raids were a signal that Israel did not really want peace and, moreover, rendered the possibility of a settlement more remote.[36]

Another popular Arab misconception (or, at least, claim) was that, at least up to the end of 1953, the retaliatory raids were designed to drive the Jordanian border inhabitants from their villages and lands 'so that they could later be easily occupied by Israeli forces'—that is, Israel's aim in retaliation was to acquire territory.[37] There is no evidence for this. In no case did an IDF retaliatory strike before the 1956 Sinai Campaign result in an Israeli attempt to take and hold chunks of Arab territory on a permanent basis.

The Evolution of the Retaliatory Doctrine

After 1948 Israel embarked fairly quickly on retaliatory operations as one element in its battle against infiltration. As early as September 1949 Ben-Gurion referred to punitive cross-border raids as a necessary part of Israeli strategy.[38]

At first, as we have suggested, the raids were small-scale (squad- and platoon-sized) and aimed, as in the pre-state period, at striking back at specific infiltrators who had committed acts of sabotage or terror in Israel. But it soon became apparent that what had been effective and possible in pre-state days was no longer relevant. There were hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of active infiltrators in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and it was extremely difficult to pinpoint swiftly and surely who had done what. (The IDF usually retaliated as soon as possible after an infiltrator

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[35] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 18 Aug. 1953, BGA.

[36] S. R. Tyler jun. (Jerusalem) to State Dept., 8 Jan. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3, 684a.85/1-854. Sharett certainly believed that the reprisals made the prospect of peace more remote (see Sharett at meeting of Jewish Agency Executive, 13 Apr. 1954, CZA S100-92).

[37] 'Aide Memoire' to FO by ambassadors of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Libya, 17 Sept. 1954, PRO FO 371-111074.

[38] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 30 Sept. 1949, BGA.

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outrage—both to soften international criticism of Israel and to drive home the message that terrorism would generate rapid and specific Israeli reprisals). Often, all the IDF had to help in identifying the perpetrators were tracks leading back to the border, towards a particular village or refugee camp. Hence, the army began fairly quickly to attack 'collective' targets—villages or bedouin encampments from which, or from near which, infiltrators had set out—and to use larger military formations (platoons and companies).[39]

As time passed, the number of infiltrator depredations and terror attacks far outnumbered IDF retaliatory strikes, for the army normally struck only after a series of attacks, usually after a particularly grisly murder. Israeli intelligence gradually built up a picture of villages that were in one way or another linked to infiltrator crimes. A potential target list of dozens of West Bank and Gaza Strip villages was drawn up.[40] When the Israeli public, army, and Cabinet had reached the limit of endurance, after a series of infiltrator raids, the political echelon would turn to the IDF and order or approve a reprisal. The IDF would propose a target or targets from the list. The political leaders—at first the defence minister alone, later the prime minister jointly with the defence and foreign ministers, and, still later, the Mapai ministerial caucus or the full Cabinet—would select from, reject, or approve the targets proposed. The chosen target or targets would not necessarily be connected to the latest, climactic outrage. This enabled the IDF to attain surprise: it could hit villages with no reason to suspect that they had been targeted. Surprise usually meant greater effectiveness and fewer IDF casualties.

The retaliatory doctrine changed radically in the wake of the IDF raid on Qibya in October 1953. Dayan himself conceded that the negative fall-out from the operation—in the form of Western condemnation and pressure— had easily surpassed any gains.[41] Henceforth, military and police bases and outposts, rather than villages, became the targets. Qibya— with its some seventy dead—had highlighted the political and ethical dangers of attacking civilian targets. As Dayan, with uncharacteristic self-righteousness, put it in his memoirs, 'Israel had learned that even when Arabs harm peaceful [Israeli] civilians, we must direct our retaliation at military objectives. What is permitted the Arabs . . . will not be forgiven . . . the Jews . . .'[42]

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[39] Glubb analysed the steady growth in the dimensions of the IDF raids in 'After Qibya', 14 Jan. 1954, PRO FO 371-111069 VR1072/10.

[40] One such list was appended to 'Infiltration in the Year 1952 (Summary for the Months Jan.-Nov.)', IDF Intelligence Dept., undated, ISA FM 2428/4 aleph. The list names two villages in the 'Lebanese-Syrian' sector, forty-one villages and towns in the Jordanian sector (including Qibya, Rantis, Falama, Idna, Beit Jala, Qalqilya, and Khirbet `Azzun), and seven in the Egyptian sector (including Khan Yunis, Gaza and `Abasan).

[41] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 245, entry for 21 Dec. 1953.

[42] Dayan, *Avnei Derekh*, 115. An echo of the change is to be heard in Evans (Tel Aviv) to

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Ben-Gurion, who before 1954 had repeatedly sanctioned IDF strikes against Arab civilian targets, in late 1955 explained to Eban (after the ambassador had protested against Israel's massive attack on Syrian positions on the north-eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee): 'We cannot and must not hit civilians across the border. We may only attack their military or police forces.'[43]

The new guidelines for reprisals were set out at the end of 1953:

> *A*. Confrontation will be open and there will be no camouflaging or blurring the identity of the perpetrators [i.e. Israel would admit responsibility for the reprisal, and no longer deny knowledge or point to anonymous vigilantes].
>
> *B*. Arab villages will not be needlessly attacked, and injury to unarmed civilians, women and children will be avoided.
>
> *C*. The principle of cleaving to the place and method of the [original Arab] crime— is revoked. We shall hit the enemy where and how we choose, even if the objective does not exactly match the enemy's crime.
>
> *D*. The speed of the operation [i.e. reprisal] is decisive—the reaction must be as quick as possible and as soon as possible after the crime.
>
> *E*. The targets chosen [for attack] will be crucial objectives: military centres, [military] camps, police [stations], National Guard concentrations deep behind [enemy lines], the attack upon which will be as painful as possible.[44]

The prohibition against attacking Arab villages was thus not absolute. And, indeed, there were one or two attacks on civilian targets during the following years. Nevertheless, there had been a radical policy change, involving a shift from collective punishment of civilians to punishment of the offending state via attacks on its military or police. While this major change in targeting occurred more or less simultaneously with the Moderate Sharett's assumption of the premiership and the (temporary) retirement of the Activist Ben-Gurion at the end of 1953, it appears that the Activists and Moderates both accepted the need for the change.

Following Qibya, there had been a surge in proposals for changing the retaliatory policy. The focus had been on 'deniable' small units. One-time intelligence executive Ezra Danin had proposed selectively targeting Arab terrorists.[45] Palmon, the prime minister's Arab affairs adviser, had proposed using Israeli Arabs to sabotage West Bank targets.[46] Teddy Kollek, the director general of the Prime Minister's Office, had proposed establishing a special agency for pre-emptive strikes, to be headed by Ehud

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FO, 1 Apr. 1954, PRO FO 371-111099 VR1091/36: Sharett 'insisted that reprisals . . . should be restricted as much as possible to action against the Arab Legion or the National Guard'.

[43] Ben-Gurion to Eban, 19 Dec. 1955, BGA.

[44] IDF Operations document quoted in Drori, 'Mediniyut HaGmul', 33.

[45] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 250, entry for 24 Dec. 1953.

[46] 'The Situation along the Israel-Jordan Borders and Proposals to Improve It', Palmon, undated but with covering note, B. Yekutieli to prime minister's secretary, etc., 25 Feb. 1954, ISA PMO 5433/23.

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Avriel, a leading clandestine Haganah operative in Europe before May 1948.[47] But it was Dayan's proposal, of large-scale IDF raids on Arab military targets, that had carried the day.

The late-1953 policy switch held until autumn 1956, when Israeli decision-makers concluded that the new-fangled retaliatory strikes—using companies, battalions and, even, brigades—were not cost-effective and that the IDF could not continue sustaining the casualties involved. Israeli casualties in the September-October raids showed a more or less steady increase: Ar Rahwa, on 11/12 September, 9 Israeli wounded (with 20 Arab Legionnaires killed); Gharandal, on 13/14 September, 1 IDF dead, 12 wounded (16 Arab Legionnaires killed and 6 wounded); Husan, 25/26 September, 10 IDF dead, 16 wounded (39 Jordanians killed and 12 wounded); and Qalqilya, 10/11 October, 18 IDF dead and 88 wounded (88 Jordanians killed and 14 wounded). And the terrorist infiltrators kept coming. By then, almost everyone, including the IDF General Staff, Western diplomats, and UN observers, had concluded that the reprisals were ineffective.[48] This realization helped set the stage for the Sinai Campaign.

The Beginning of the Retaliatory Strikes, 1949-1951

Israeli retaliatory policy during the early post-1948 years took a number of routes before arriving at its two main, definitive forms—small-unit infantry attacks on villages thought to harbour or serve as bases for terrorist infiltrators or on neighbouring villages; and medium- and large-unit infantry attacks on Arab police forts and army bases and positions.

Reprisals took four main forms in the formative 1949-51 period: (*a*) mortar attacks on offending Arab villages and nearby military positions; (*b*) strafing by Israel Air Force (IAF) fighters of Arab villagers, encampments, and fields; (*c*) infantry raids on Arab villages and military patrols and positions; (*d*) minings. The military and intelligence also periodically responded to Arab infiltrator attacks with covert operations.

Mortar Attacks

Large-scale economic infiltration by Gaza Strip Arabs to the east of Beit Hanun and `Abasan resulted in the first documented cases of extensive

[47] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 245, entry for 21 Dec. 1953.

[48] See, e.g., 'Report on a Conversation with UN Observers', unsigned (but possibly by Y. Tekoah), undated (but from late Sept. 1956), ISA FM 2949/4; and Teveth, *Dayan*, 439-40.

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IDF mortaring of Arab villages after the 1948 war. The Israelis—correctly —maintained that the fields and groves targetd by the infiltrators were on the Israeli side of the border, as demarcated in the Israeli-Egyptian armistice accord. On 7 October 1949 Israeli troops mortared `Abasan for forty-five minutes, hitting several houses. No warning had been given and 'the villagers . . . left their homes in a state of fear and panic', reported General Riley, the chief of staff of UNTSO. His observers had found signs of forty-four 'impacts'. One woman was killed and three (nine, according to another report) wounded. Some forty sheep were killed, but the damage to houses was 'not extensive'. The villagers returned to `Abasan.[49]

A second IDF attack followed on 14 October, when, after a preliminary sixty-round mortar bombardment of the eastern outskirts of Beit Hanun, four machine-gun-mounted jeeps pursued the Arab infiltrator-cultivators across the ill-defined border back into the Strip. The attack was 'well planned and executed'. Riley thought.[50] At least four Arabs were killed and fifteen wounded. 'Practically all had been shot in the back,' he reported.[51] The 'Egyptians have attempted to prevent Arabs crossing [the border] but a whole army would be needed to stop them . . . The Egyptians asked [the] Israelis to stop shooting these Arabs and to return them to Egypt . . . for punishment.' Riley wrote. The Egyptians maintained that the Beit Hanun Arabs 'were only cultivating their fields and tending their groves . . . It was their land . . . The fruit will begin to ripen in two weeks or so.' The Egyptian delegate to the EIMAC, General Tewfik Megahed, asked Riley to persuade the Israelis to permit the farmers to collect their crops.[52] Following these incidents, the US consul-general in Jerusalem reported that the local IDF commander was 'removed'. But Israel continued to maintain that what it did in the eastern (Israeli) half of `Abasan was an internal Israeli matter.[53]

By summer 1949 Israeli and Egyptian officers had secretly begun negotiating a possible readjustment of the border that would leave the whole of `Abasan and its fields in Egyptian hands, with Israel receiving a *quid pro quo* along the northern edge of the Strip.[54] The October incidents underlined the urgency of an agreement. Eventually, the Egyptians agreed,[55] and an accord was signed in March 1950. The two sides agreed

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[49] Riley to Cordier, 8 Oct. 1949, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-22; Riley to Cordier, 18 Oct. 1949, UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0-1.

[50] Burdett (Jerusalem) to US mission to UN (New York), 17 Oct. 1949, UNA DAG-1/ 2.1.4-22.

[51] Riley to Cordier, 18 Oct. 1949, UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0-1.

[52] Riley to Cordier, 17 Oct. 1949, UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0-1.

[53] Burdett to US mission to UN, 15 Oct. 1949, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-22.

[54] Harkabi to FM legal adviser, 30 Aug. 1949, and legal adviser to foreign minister's bureau, 4 Sept. 1949, papers deposited with and kindly shown me by Yitzhak Nishri, Kibbutz Erez.

[55] 'Report on Meeting on 6 Jan. 1950 with Colonel Riad', Lt.-Col. K. Keet, IDF staff officer for MACs, 10 Jan. 1950, papers deposited with Yitzhak Nishri, Kibbutz Erez.

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to a mechanism for sorting out local disputes and the new line was demarcated with empty tin barrels, eventually to be replaced by a continuous ditch. The officers also agreed on continued joint Israeli-Egyptian patrols along the border and the establishment of one or two joint static posts.[56]

But the re-demarcation of parts of the border did not end Israeli-Egyptian friction, which was continually fuelled by Arab infiltration. The incursions, and the shooting incidents they provoked, often sucked in troops on both sides. In March 1950 the murder by Israeli troops of the three infiltrating `Abasan children (two of whom were first raped) provoked an Arab mining attack which killed five Israelis. In response, on 1 April, the IDF again mortared (and machine-gunned) `Abasan, wounding one Arab girl.[57] Local Egyptian and UN officials tried to cool down tempers. But the mukhtar of `Abasan, previously a restraining influence (according to UN observers), now declared that 'upon the next provocation, he would not only permit but exhort his men to harass Israeli settlers and army outposts'.[58] The Egyptians apparently arrested some of those involved in the mining attack, and the Israelis informed the United Nations that they had arrested two soldiers and were interrogating them about the murder of the children.[59]

The IDF's use of mortars in retaliation was not restricted to the Gaza border. The village of Idna, in the western Hebron foothills, figured prominently in IDF intelligence reports during 1949-56 as a jumping-off point for infiltrators. On 16 October 1949, after a series of attacks on Israeli vehicles near the border, Ben-Gurion had already written:

> Dayan [asks] whether to mount a punitive strike against the village of Idna . . . My view is that it is preferable first to approach the [Arab] Legion and give them a friendly warning that if they do not prevent attacks in our territory—we will have to act. This may not help—but it cannot hurt . . . Dayan believes it won't help and it won't hurt . . . I asked him what would he say if the Legion attacked one of our settlements? He [said he] would respond vigorously.

Dayan, who became OC Southern Command on 25 October, had proposed an 'artillery strike' against the village.[60]

The first recorded retaliatory mortaring by the IDF of West Bank

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[56] *Alon Yad Mordechai*, 25 Mar. 1950, Kibbutz Yad Mordechai Archive.

[57] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 2 April 1950, BGA.

[58] Riley to Cordier, 5 Apr. 1950, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-27; R. A. Gibson (Jerusalem) to State Dept., 4 Apr. 1950, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Egypt.

[59] Riley to Cordier, 12 Apr. 1950, and Riley to Cordier, 19 Apr. 1950, both in UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-27.

[60] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 16 Oct. 1949, BGA; Dayan, *Avnei*, 93.

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villagers took place on 20 March 1950 against Khirbet Jamrura, in the Western Hebron foothills. It was part of a wider reprisal following the death of an IDF soldier and the wounding of several others in the area in a spate of infiltrator attacks. An IDF force numbering 'at least three armoured half-tracks', according to Kirkbride, 'crossed [the] border . . . [and] fired indiscriminately apparently at any living thing, and killed a woman, wounded a girl and killed a number of animals.' UN observers, citing Arab witnesses, said that six half-tracks, mounting mortars and machine-guns, had participated, and that six Arabs (four men, a woman, and a girl) had been killed and three taken prisoner. The Israelis took sixty-three head of cattle with them when they withdrew.[61]

The attack may have been a local (IDF Southern Command) initiative. Within days, the Israeli government apologized to `Abdullah for the incident. The State Department cautioned Israel that the raid would have a negative effect on the secret Israeli-Jordanian peace negotiations.[62] Kirkbride reported from Amman that the IDF's armoured incursion had done 'much to heal the breach between the King [i.e. `Abdullah] and his inisters [who opposed the negotiations with Israel] . . .'.[63]

On 8 June the IDF mortared the village of Imwas, near Latrun. According to the Jordanian complaint, twenty-one shells fell around the village, but caused no casualties.[64] After several infiltrator attacks, Idna was mortared on 17 April 1950, some forty shells landing on and near the village. A number of villagers were wounded.[65] The following year, after a spate of infiltrator attacks, including a mining in which four IDF soldiers were wounded, IDF troops crossed the border, combed the area, and again

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[61] Kirkbride to FO, 23 Mar. 1950, PRO FO 371-82203 E1091/4; H. Dow (Jerusalem) to FO, 25 Mar. 1950, PRO FO 371-82203 E1091/5; Riley to Cordier, 24 Mar. 1950, UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0-1; and G. A. Drew (Amman) to State Dept., 24 Mar. 1950, and J. McDonald (Tel Aviv) to SecState, 31 Mar. 1950, both in NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan.

[62] Riley reported that A. Biran, the Israeli Jerusalem DC, had appeared 'genuinely concerned' when informed of the incident (Riley to Cordier, 24 Mar. 1950, UNA DAG-1/ 2.2.5.2.0-1). See also Kirkbride to FO, 25 Mar. 1950, PRO FO 371-82203 E1091/6; and K. Helm to FO, 28 Mar. 1950, PRO FO 371-82203 E1091/7.

[63] 'Monthly Situation Report for the Jordan for the Month of Mar. 1950', 1 Apr. 1950, PRO FO 371-82703 ET1013/4; 'Memorandum of Conversation' (Rockwell, Keren), 27 Mar. 1950, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 1. Dayan, in explaining the raid to IDF CGS Yadin, reportedly said that 'he could not ask soldiers to carry a tape measure with them on manœuvres'. US Secretary of State Acheson was incensed by this 'explanation' of the raid. He cabled McDonald that 'the attitude of both Yadin and Dayan . . . demonstrates lack of respect for rights of others, which is prerequisite to successful peace negotiations' (McDonald to Secstate, 29 Mar. 1950, and Acheson to McDonald, 30 Mar. 1950, both in NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan).

[64] Gibson to SecState, 12 June 1950, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 1.

[65] Gibson to SecState, 21 Apr. 1950, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 2.

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briefly mortared Idna. According to Ben-Gurion, eighteen Arab 'infiltrators' (apparently shepherds and cultivators) were killed in the operation. The IDF lost one dead and nine wounded. The mortaring destroyed three houses.[66] The village was mortared again in late May 1951 following further clashes between IDF patrols and infiltrating herdsmen; several villagers were wounded.[67]

Mortaring as a method of retaliation was rarely used after 1951. But the biggest such retaliatory attack—the mortaring of Gaza City—took place five years later, on 5 Apr. 1956 (again on Dayan's orders).

Strafing

In May 1950 Jordan alleged that, since March, Israeli aircraft had on sixteen occasions during the previous weeks strafed Arab farmers and refugees inside Jordan (apart from carrying out numerous non-violent overflights). One of the attacks, on 11 April, had been directed against villagers from Idna, when the pilot had killed several sheep.[68] Another strafing attack, on 12 May, on Arabs in Wadi Rakati, had ended in the death of a woman.[69] Amman complained that altogether four Jordanian civilians—a man, two women, and a child—had died in the attacks, the latest having been on 16 May 1950; seven civilians had been injured. As a result of these raids, `Arab morale west of [the River] Jordan [is] deteriorating. All concerned here [are] convinced latest incidents are deliberate challenge to test [the] extent [of the] validity [of the] British guarantee [to Jordan] of [the territorial] integrity [of] Arab Palestine [i.e. West Bank] ,.[70]

Jordan, which had no air force, asked Britain to provide RAF air patrols, in partial implementation of their joint defence treaty. Such patrols, it was felt, would deter further IAF incursions and attacks. But Britain turned down the request, perhaps not unmindful of the five Spitfires it had lost in a dogfight with IAF fighters over Sinai in January 1949.

Some Jordanian officials believed that the strafings and other incidents in May 1950 were due to Israeli displeasure at King `Abdullah's suspension of the secret peace talks with Israel—'an Israel attempt to bring Jordan to

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[66] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 8 Mar. 1951, BGA; 'Press Release No. 1', 7 Mar. 1951, Information Services of the State of Israel Foreign Press Division, PRO FO 371-91386.

[67] Tyler to State Dept., 6 June 1951, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[68] Riley to Cordier, 19 Apr. 1950, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-27; Riley to Cordier, 30 May 1950, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-27.

[69] Glubb (?) to FO, 17 May 1950, PRO FO 371-82203 E1091/11.

[70] Ibid.

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heel', as Kirkbride put it. Kirkbride noted that, 'as the hope of an [Israeli] agreement with Jordan faded, the Israeli army adopted a much more aggressive attitude on the frontier. Whether this change was deliberate or coincidental is difficult to say.'[71]

The strafing attacks may have been unauthorized by-products of training runs by IAF units, which, in spring 1950, began using the Beit Govrin area for exercises. Some pilots, out of excessive zeal or for 'fun', may have decided to treat Arab herds and shepherds wandering along the border as fair game.[72] But it is more likely that the strafings were authorized by the IDF General Staff or by Southern Command (Dayan) in co-ordination with the OC IAF, partly as a means of letting the local Arabs know that the Beit Govrin area was off-limits and was an IAF training ground. The IAF attacks were invariably directed not at villages but at villagers who the Israelis believed were grazing or reaping too close to or inside Israeli lines.

The IDF appears at this time also to have used attack aircraft against at least one bedouin encampment in the Gaza area. On 30 June 1950 the Egyptians complained that Israeli raiders had 'opened fire on local inhabitants [near Rafah] then burnt their crops and tents', while receiving support from aircraft who strafed and bombed the inhabitants. The Egyptians reported one Arab killed and several injured. Riley commented that the Israeli incursion may have been in retaliation for earlier raids on an Israeli settlement by `Arab marauders'.[73]

Strafing of this type appears to have been largely discontinued after summer 1950, although it was used, albeit rarely, a number of times during the following years. In summer 1953, for example, Israeli planes reportedly strafed bedouin encampments and grazers a number of times in the DMZ along the Israeli-Egyptian frontier. The chairman of the Israel-Egypt MAC, Colonel T. M. Hinkle (US Marine Corps) reported that Israeli planes had fired on and killed two bedouins and a number of animals near Bir el Malaqi on 6 July. On 19 July further strafing attacks injured two

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[71] M. Abdel Mejid, Jordan minister to London, to Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, 30 May 1950, PRO FO 371-82203 EEl091/20; Kirkbride to FO, 25 May 1950, PRO FO 371-82203 EE1091/15; FO to British Legation, Amman, 2 June 1950, PRO FO 371-82203; 'Jordan: Annual Review for 1950', Kirkbride, undated (but from early 1951), PRO FO 371-91788 ET1011/1.

[72] In late Mar. 1950 an IDF MAC officer, Col. K. Keet, told American diplomats that on 20 Mar. Israel had informed Jordan and UNTSO that it intended to use the Belt Govrin area for IAF practice runs (see McDonald to SecState, 31 Mar. 1950, and Drew to Acheson, 24 Mar. 1950 (which described several mock attacks), both in NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan).

[73] Riley to Cordier, 1 July 1950, UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0-1. Egyptian civilians questioned by UN observers after the incident 'stated that they observed no (repeat) no bombing by planes', Riley wrote. It is possible that Israel's aircraft merely overflew the site as it was being attacked from the ground.

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bedouin children and killed 'many camels'. In an attack on 30 July, one bedouin was reported killed. More attacks allegedly occurred on 2 and 3 or 4 August, and a bedouin girl was injured in a two-plane attack on 8 August.[74]

Infantry Raids: Sharafat

Before 1950 there appear to have been a handful of minor retaliatory raids by armed Israeli settlers against offending Arab villages, but there are only sketchy traces of them in the documentation. For example, in December 1949, Israeli raiders fired on houses in Jalbun village, on the northern edge of the West Bank. A UN observer suggested that the raid might have been in retaliation for Arab fire a day or two before on Israelis 'alleged to have been stealing cattle in Arab territory.'[75]

The Jalbun raid may have been a vigilante operation by local Israeli settlers or rogue troops rather than an 'official' IDF action. This was most probably the case with a large raid seven months earlier by a group of 'Jews and Druse' on the Lebanese border village of Rmaich. The raid, on 4 April 1949, by some '200' armed men, according to the Lebanese gendarmerie complaint, was in retaliation for earlier theft-oriented raids on the Galilee Druse village of Hurfeish by Palestinian refugees from Deir al Kassi, now resident in Rmaich. The Israeli raiders detained and took back to Israel several Palestinians.[76] At a subsequent meeting of the Israel-Lebanon MAC, on 21 April, the Israeli delegates complained of the 'grave' situation along the border and advised the Lebanese to take action in order 'to prevent the adoption of sharp measures . . . by us'. The Lebanese delegates complained that IDF troops were 'crossing the border' and behaving in an 'unfriendly fashion' towards the Lebanese inhabitants. In one case, according to the Lebanese delegate, an Israeli officer, on a

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[74] Lt. Col. W. T. McAninch (Jerusalem) to Cordier for Bennike (New York), 30 Oct. 1953, UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0: 1. Israel admitted to only one of these air attacks. On 17 Aug. 1953 Lt.-Col. Shalev, the IDF General Staff officer for the MACs, met with the Western military attachés in Tel Aviv and admitted that IDF aircraft had attacked 'a bedouin camp some ten kilometres inside the Egyptian border'. Shalev told the attachés that the matter was being investigated (British Embassy, Tel. Aviv, to Eastern Department, FO, 17 Aug. 1953, PRO FO 371-104766). See also Tal, 'HaTguvot', 25, 134 n. 51.

[75] The Israeli raid, incidentally, caused exaggerated panic in Jalbun and Amman. The villagers 'in their terror' briefly evacuated the site, and a UN observer, Capt. Bouteille, had to escort them back to their homes. Jordan's Foreign Minister, Ruhi Abdul Hadi, (mistakenly) complained that the IDF had 'captured Jalbun' and 'expelled' its inhabitants (Col. Coverdale (Jerusalem) to Cordier and Riley (New York), 6 Dec. 1949, and Riley (Jersalem) to UN (Rhodes), 5 Dec. 1949, both in UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0-1.

[76] 'Incident Report', Israel-Lebanon MAC, undated (but from early Apr. 1949), ISA FM 2432/7.

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raid on Aitaroun, ordered two Arab villagers to strip naked. He then 'burnt their clothes, shot dead a horse and sent them back to Aitaroun naked'.[77]

Along the Jordanian border, a year later, on 6 April 1950, an. IDF patrol entered the village of Budrus and fired at the houses with automatic weapons. The Israelis were reportedly driven off by Jordanian counter-fire.[78] Two months later, on 5 June 1950, a company of IDF infantry attacked an Arab Legion position west of Hebron (after troops from that position had apparently assisted a group of infiltrators)'.[79]

Well-planned, co-ordinated ground raids against Jordanian villages began in January-February 1951. On 29 January a squad of IDF troops attacked a house in Yalu, in the Latrun Salient, wounding one Arab when they threw grenades.[80] A few days later, on 2 February, Israeli troops crossed the frontier near Tulkarm and blew up fourteen telegraph poles.[81] The following night, on 3 February, Israeli troops attacked the village of Saffa, killing one man and wounding two. This series of attacks culminated in raids on Sharafat, south-west of Jerusalem, and Falama, north-east of Qalqilya, on 7-9 February. These marked the beginning of the full-scale retaliatory strikes against Arab villages that characterized the border war for the next three years.

Glubb correctly noted that Falama and Sharafat signified a new departure, perhaps even a new strategy.[82] Until January-February 1951 the IDF had 'rarely crossed the border', according to an Arab Legion report. Now, there had been two raids of identical 'technique and tactics'. It seemed that the 'orders to carry out these raids [had] been issued by some very high authority . . . The object in every case seems to be merely to kill Arabs indiscriminately.' The Legion professed not to know the reason for Israel's change of strategy but conjectured that it was due to a reduced fear of British intervention, following Britain's exhibition of 'a marked desire for a rapprochement with Israel . . . [Israel feels it] can get tough with Jordan without any risks . . . The Jews have been oppressed and bullied for centuries . . . Such people, when at last set free, tend to enjoy bullying and browbeating others,' wrote Glubb,[83] ignoring the fact that the Yalu and Falama raids had been provoked by lethal attacks by infiltrators.

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[77] Schnorrman to OC 'A' [Northern] Front, 'Baruch', undated (but from late Apr. 1949). ISA FM 2432/7.

[78] Riley to Cordier, 19 Apr. 1950, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-27.

[79] Commonwealth Relations Office, FO, to UK High Commissioners in Canada, Australia, etc., 9 June 1950, PRO FO 371-82203; A. S. Kirkbride (Amman) to FO, 6 June 1950, PRO FO 371-82204. Kirkbride commented: 'While individual Arabs may be giving some provocation there seems to be no doubt that the Israel Army is unnecessarily bloody-minded.'

[80] Kirkbride to FO, 7 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/8.

[81] Kirkbride to FO, 7 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/8. Kirkbride wrote that the raid was carried out by 'eight Jewish civilians and four Jewish soldiers'.

[82] Glubb to Riley, 8 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/23.

[83] 'Note on the Situation on the Israeli-Jordan Demarcation Line', Arab Legion HQ, 12 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/20.

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At Falama, a squad of IDF troops had thrown a grenade into a house, killing a man and two of his children in their beds.[84] But the climactic raid of the series, on Sharafat, is worth close examination, for it clearly heralded the IDF strategy for the years 1951-3—of collectively punishing a village thought to be a base for infiltrators who had committed acts of sabotage or murder in Israel.[85]

The raid was a response to a particularly savage infiltrator attack in A1 Maliha (Manahat), a suburb of Jerusalem, on 5 February. IDF intelligence had pin-pointed the attackers' 'base' as Sharafat. Ben-Gurion recorded the Israeli decision-making process:

> The [IDF General] Staff proposed . . . that we hit the [Arab] Legion [post] near Maliha in response to the attack on us yesterday—the murder of an *oleh*, the rape of his wife, and the robbery of his home. I forbade an attack on the Legion, but [instead] I ordered the blowing up of the nearby village which was responsible for the crime.[86]

After the raid, Dayan was to refer to Sharafat as having been an 'eye for an eye'.[87]

On the night of 6/7 February, a platoon-sized force of IDF troops of the 16th (Jerusalem) Brigade went into Sharafat, just across the border south-west of Jerusalem, surrounded two houses, one of them the village *mukhtar*'s, and blew them up. The Arab Legion reported Arab casualties as nine killed, including three women and five children, aged 1-13, and eight wounded (five children and three women). Some of the casualties had bullet wounds; others had died or been injured in the explosions.[88]

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[84] 'The Sharafat and Falama Atrocities', Arab Legion HQ, 12 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/8. Kirkbride commented:
The Israelis will doubtless seek to justify their actions by claiming that they were taken in retaliation for acts committed by Arab infiltrators. I have pointed out before that this sort of unilateral frightfulness does not prevent incidents on the frontier but only makes matters worse by creating ill-feeling and giving more Arabs incentive for revenge . . . . I need hardly repeat again that such a state of affairs reacts against any progress towards the settlement which the Israeli government professes itself so anxious to attain (Kirkbride to Bevin, 10 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/18).

[85] Aaronson and Horowitz, in their pioneering essay 'HaIstrategia shel Tagmul Mevukar', mistakenly call the Sharafat Raid 'the first use of retaliatory strikes as a response to the infiltration'. They also erroneously referred to Sharafat—a village south of Jerusalem—as Shu'fat—a suburb north of Jerusalem.

[86] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 6 Feb. 1951, BGA.

[87] Tyler to State Dept., 14 Feb. 1951, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan, Box 6.

[88] 'The Sharafat and Falama Atrocities', Arab Legion HQ, 12 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/8. See also Kirkbride to FO, 7 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/8; Kirkbride to FO, 10 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/18. Kirkbride in his reports carefully referred to 'a Jewish armed party' or 'a party of persons' rather than to the IDF as responsible.

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Israel at first 'denied all knowledge of the incident'.[89] But the following day, Reuven Shiloah, the head of the Mossad, told the British ambassador, Knox Helm, that 'such an incident had unfortunately occurred through the action of the inhabitants on [the] Israel side provoked by Arab raiding, raping, etc. from [the] Jordan side . . . [Shiloah] professed to be much concerned.' A few days later, Shiloah, who was about to meet King `Abdullah for a further round of peace negotiations, 'more or less admitted to me that individual Israel soldiers might have been associated with [the] Sharafat outrage . . . . He was emphatic however that anything of the kind had no official connivance.' Shiloah denied that the raid had been launched with an eye to pressuring `Abdullah for concessions during the forthcoming talks.[90]

The severe shock waves created by the raid were apparently not anticipated by the Israeli leadership (a pattern that was to recur). Ben-Gurion jotted down in his diary that Sharafat had caused a 'storm in Transjordan'.[91] Perhaps it was the disproportion between the provocation and the retribution that incensed many observers. For others, it was the difference between terrorism by individuals and what Palestinian spokesmen of a later generation were to call Israeli 'state terrorism'. The Arab Legion report on the incident put it this way:

> It cannot be too strongly emphasized that incidents complained of by Israel were committed by dispossessed and embittered Arabs, whose lands and houses have been taken by the Jews, and never by the Arab Legion or police. The incidents complained of by Jordan, on the other hand, are committed by armed Israeli troops or police . . . Israeli professions of peace . . . are little likely to achieve a settlement while their troops . . . are at liberty to harry the villagers of Jordan as they please while their government is either unwilling or unable to restrain them.[92]

`Abdullah, for his part, 'took [a] most serious view' of the Israeli attack and 'felt he had reached [the] end of his conciliatory attitude towards Israelis which had been completely unproductive'. The Jordanian prime minister, Samir Rifa'i, described the raid as 'fiendish' and 'provocative'.[93] American officials noted that Rifa'i had previously been regarded by Israel as 'generally reasonable and conciliatory'. His assumption of the premier-

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[89] H. Dow (Jerusalem) to FO, 9 Feb. 1951, reporting on meeting of IJMAC, 8 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/9.

[90] K. Helm (Tel Aviv) to FO, 9 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/9; Helm to FO, 13 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/12. British officials subsequently seemed to sense Israeli remorse for what had happened. One official minuted a Helm report: 'I think the Israelis were really disturbed by the atrocities committed by their own people at Sharafat' (minute, signature indecipherable, 15 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/12).

[91] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 7 Feb. 1951, BGA.

[92] 'The Sharafat and Falama Atrocities', PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/8.

[93] Fritzlan to State Dept., 8 Feb. 1951, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan.

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ship in Jordan had presented a 'golden opportunity' for peace. Now, following Sharafat, Rifa`i's hopes for peace had been 'rudely shattered'. Rifa`i was now 'convinced' that Israel 'did not seriously desire peace' but rather preferred 'strained' relations with Jordan. In general, the US Embassy in Amman reported, Sharafat had greatly strengthened the anti-peace camp in Jordan.[94]

Sharafat also precipitated a minor political storm in Israel. In the subsequent Cabinet debate, on 8 February, Justice Minister Pinhas Rosen criticized the killing of the civilians. Sharett used the opportunity to propose that Israel allow back some Arab refugees, as a goodwill gesture.[95] It is probable that Sharett's critical letter to IDF CGS Yadin, on 12 February, was also at least in part prompted by Sharafat—though the raid itself was not explicitly mentioned. Sharett berated Yadin for taking too narrow a view of Israel's defence policy and needs. Defence, wrote Sharett, must be seen not only in strictly 'military' terms—it also consisted of maintaining good relations with 'a certain world power' (that is, the United States) which could supply Israel with arms.[96]

At a meeting of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, Ben-Gurion was questioned about 'what had happened at Sharafat' as well as about the fate of the Shiloah-`Abdullah peace talks. One Herut Party MK, Eliahu Meridor, asked provocatively: 'Did dissidents [meaning, *IZL* members] commit the deed in Sharafat?'—a dig at Labour's persistent charge that it was the Revisionists (precursors of the Herut Party), responsible for the Deir Yassin massacre of April 1948, who (alone) had been terrorists. In a more serious vein, Meridor asked whether the Jordanian government was 'behind the infiltrators, or whether [it is the work] of the Mufti's faction?'[97] That same day, 12 February, a dissenting letter—the first of its kind on Israel's battle against the infiltrators published in the Israeli press—appeared in the *Jerusalem Post*, signed by four leading Jewish intellectuals, Norman Bentwich, Leon Roth, Werner Senator, and Leon Simon. The four said they had been 'waiting anxiously' for a government statement on Sharafat. None had been forthcoming. Apparently,

> no inquiry is to be made to establish responsibility for the murder of innocent persons. It will be said that we are unrealistic sentimentalists . . . that firm action

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[94] Fritzlan to SecState, 9 Feb. 1951, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 1. The thrust of this cable was, to a degree, endorsed by John Waldo, the State Dept. official in charge of Palestine-Israel-Jordan affairs, at a meeting with Israel's first secretary in Washington, Esther Herlitz ('Meeting: E. Herlitz-J. Waldo (Washington, 12 Feb. 1951)', in *DFPI*, vi (1951), 104).

[95] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 8 Feb. 1951, BGA; 'Protocol of the Cabinet Meeting of 8 Feb. 1951', ISA RG 77 7263/11.

[96] Sharett to Yadin, 12 Feb. 1951, *DFPI*, vi (1951), 98-9.

[97] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 12 Feb. 1951, BGA.

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is the only way of 'teaching' the Arabs. That kind of talk is an utter abandonment of morality and a debasement of Jewish standards.[98]

In the short term, the Sharafat and Falama raids resulted in a meeting, on 15 February, between top Israeli and Jordanian officers in which agreement was reached on a number of practical measures of cooperation to curb infiltration, such as a telephone link between Israeli and Jordanian officers in each region.[99] But, in the long term, these raids (and others that followed) also resulted in 'giving more Arabs incentive for revenge' and in making the prospect of peace still more remote.[100]

The view from London, even before the major February 1951 raids, was that the cycle of border hostilities had 'already considerably exacerbated feeling between the two countries and rendered still more remote the chances of the Jordan ministers (as opposed to King Abdullah) agreeing to direct negotiations for a settlement . . .'.[101] Israel's shoot-to-kill and expulsion policies *vis-à-vis* the infiltrators and the IDF raids into Jordan appear to have contributed both to `Abdullah's hesitations during the drawn-out peace negotiations and to the opposition within his Cabinet to compromise and peace with Israel.

Minings

During the early post-1948 period, the IDF fairly frequently responded to infiltrator attacks, especially to minings, with its own mining operations inside Arab territory. This retaliatory practice was more frequent in Southern Command, along the Israel-Gaza border, than elsewhere, and was probably an initiative of Dayan's. In August 1950, after a mine had wounded a kibbutz driver, IDF units laid mines along the Rafah-Gaza road and east of Rafah. On 3 August one of these mines killed two Egyptian girls; another, exploding under an Egyptian army truck, wounded two soldiers.[102] Periodically, thereafter, IDF squads were sent into the Gaza Strip, and, more rarely, into the West Bank, to plant mines in retaliation for infiltrator attacks.

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[98] *Jerusalem Post*, 12 Feb. 1951; Helm to FO, 12 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/12. Helm thought that 'the fact that the letter has been written and published is a healthy sign'.

[99] Helm to FO, 16 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/26.

[100] Kirkbride to Bevin, 10 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/18.

[101] Minute, Furlonge, 13 Aug. 1950, PRO FO 371-82206 E1091/100.

[102] 'Report on Jerusalem Consular District for August 1950', US consulate-general (Jerusalem) to State Dept., 11 Sept. 1950, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 1.

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Covert Operations

IDF Intelligence Department (later, Branch) also used covert operations to deter or hit infiltrators before they set out from Arab territory. In September 1950, Kirkbride reported from Amman that bombs had gone off in Nablus and Jerusalem and a number of telephone poles had been blown up near Nablus and Irbid over the previous months. Initially, the Jordanian authorities believed that Communists or followers of the ex-Mufti were responsible. Eventually, however, they arrested three Arabs, one of them, who ran the operation, belonging to the Jerrar family from Jenin. Under interrogation, he 'admitted he had organised the sabotage at the instigation of an Israeli Army Officer from Afula', whom he used to meet at the Israeli Arab village of Muqeibila. This arrest led eventually to the arrests of an Arab Legion officer who had supplied Israel with intelligence and a Tulkarm Arab who had found employment in the Iraqi Ministry of Defence.[103] There was at least one further 'telephone pole' attack during the following years.[104]

How exactly these attacks were to have helped curb infiltration is unclear—unless it was by 'persuading' the Jordanian government of the disadvantages of not taking actions against the infiltrators.[105]

More directly connected to countering infiltration was *Mivtza Ganav* (Operation Thief), apparently initiated by the IDF on the Gaza Strip border towards the end of 1951. The operation, directed by the IDF Intelligence Department, involved the theft of, or damage to, property of suspected infiltrator gang leaders, and attacks on these men. It is unclear how successful or widespread these attacks were. In February 1952 Lieutenant-Colonel Michael Hanegbi, the head of the Israel delegation to the EIMAC, proposed that 'squads of Israeli bedouin be co-opted' into the operation, and suggested that they might prove 'more successful' at it than the Jewish troops. These bedouin squads, Hanegbi proposed, should be 'managed' by local Israeli settlement leaders rather than army officers, presumably to distance the Israeli government and the IDF from the

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[103] Kirkbride to Attlee, 29 Sept. 1950, PRO FO 371-82209.

[104] Kirkbride to FO, 7 Feb. 1951, PRO FO 371-91385 E1091/8. An Arab Legion report (in NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 1) stated that ten poles had been destroyed; that an Arab who had acted as a guide for the raiding party had been caught by the Jordanians and confessed; and that he had been employed by a certain 'Lt. Sternberg' from Hadera (Israel). The Arab, who had a wife and children in the Israeli Arab village of Jatt, had apparently been coerced into assisting the IDF.

[105] The Nablus District police superintendent, Muhammad Bey Maayta, told an American diplomat that the Jews—rather than Communists—were responsible: 'Israel wants the populace of the Nablus District . . . to remain in a state of turmoil' (Root (Jerusalem) to State Dept., 14 Sept. 1950, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 1).

affair. [106] At the end of 1952 IDF intelligence proposed to revive Operation Thief in order, as it put it, 'to take as much loot as possible to create pressure [on the Egyptians] to return stolen goods . . .'.[107]

[106] 'Survey of the MAC with Egypt', Hanegbi to IDF staff officer for MACs, etc. ? Feb. 1952, ISA FM 2438/6. A similar operation does not seem to have been directed against West Bank targets. It is unclear from the available documentation how long the operation lasted, and whether the IDF squads involved injured or killed any infiltrator gang leaders or how much property they managed to steal or destroy.

[107] 'Infiltration in the Year 1952 (a Summary for the Months Jan.-Nov.)', unsigned (but by IDF Intelligence Dept.), undated, ISA FM 2428/4 aleph.

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7
Raiding and Counter-Raiding 1951-1953

The Saffa, Falama, and Sharafat raids did not bring tranquillity to the borders. Indeed, Arab economic infiltration and occasional painful terrorist raids continued apace. On 5 and 6 March 1951 IDF trucks struck mines in the Beit Jibrin area,[1] and on the night of 7/8 March a gang of '5 or 6 armed Arabs' from the Gaza Strip fired on guards of a road building company at Magen.[2] From March to June there were thefts of animals, equipment, and crops from dozens of settlements.[3] Infiltrators assaulted a number of Israelis, including an Israeli bedouin of the `Arabal tribe, who was killed south of Beersheba by two 'hostile bedouin' who stole four of his asses.[4]

Tension on the Israeli-Jordanian frontier worsened considerably on 21 June when an IDF patrol—ordered to find and expel a group of Arab infiltrators from `Ein Jamil, in Israeli territory—strayed across the border in the Judaean Hills and shot dead several Arab civilians, including a woman. A National Guard unit engaged the patrol, killing four Israelis. Three of the IDF dead were left in Jordanian territory, and one of the bodies was mutilated.[5]

A band of infiltrators, apparently thirty or forty strong, was active that summer in the southern half of the Jerusalem Corridor, sabotaging the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv rail line, cutting telephone lines, and attacking workers near `Ajjur. The Arab Legion was apparently powerless to apprehend them. Israel's efforts to 'activate the Legion' against the infiltrators had proved fruitless. The IDF high command proposed a variety of retaliatory measures, including an attack on refugees from Walaja who lived in Beit Jala, ambushes along the Hebron-Jerusalem or Jericho-Jerusalem roads, and a direct attack on a Legion unit—'so that

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[1] Press Release No. 1', Information Services of the State of Israel Foreign Press Division, 7 Mar. 1951, PRO FO 371-91386.

[2] 'Case No. 6', UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-94.

[3] Circulars nos. 4, 5, and 6, Kibbutz Artzi Security Dept., 7 Mar., 15 Apr., and 21 May 1951, HHA 18.11 (3); 'Daily Activities Report', IDF Intelligence Dept. to deputy CGS, etc., 3 May 1951, ISA FM 2433/7; 'Daily Activities Report', IDF Intelligence Dept. to deputy CGS, etc., 11 May 1951, ISA FM 2433/8; 'Daily Activities Report', IDF Intelligence Dept. to foreign minister's bureau, etc., 17 June 1951, ISA FM 2433/9 (1).

[4] 'Daily Activities Report', IDF Intelligence Dept. to deputy CGS, etc., 2 May 1951, ISA FM 2433/7.

[5] Ben-Gurion Diary, entries for 21, 22 June 1951, BGA.

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they understand that the matter is grave', in the words of General Makleff, the IDF deputy CGS.[6] In the end, Ben-Gurion and the IDF command decided on a series of small-scale operations against Beit Jala, Husan, A1 Midya, and Qalqilya. An 8-year-old girl was killed and her brother and mother were wounded in the most serious attack when an IDF squad threw a grenade into a house in Khirbet al Najjar, near Latrun, on the night of 11/12 July. In other pinprick attacks in the second week of July, two Arab men were killed and nine wounded. Ben-Gurion believed that the mini-raids had accomplished their purpose and noted that 'the situation on the Jerusalem border in the wake of the operation[s] has improved'.[7] But the Arab villagers feared that the wave of raids was 'a preparatory step for some big operation' rather than a reprisal. The Legion commanders 'could not make out the [raids'] aim'. Israel's delegate to the IJMAC, Lieutenant-Colonel Ramati, while implying that the raids were not the work of the IDF, left his Legion counterparts in no doubt that they were in retaliation for infiltrator attacks.[8]

But the July raids failed to pacify the border. IDF troops again crossed the border, on the night of 16/17 October 1951, blowing up a flour mill near Qalqilya and planting two mines.[9] The summer of 1951 also saw the start of widespread attacks by marauders—mostly bedouin—on Israeli traffic, settlements, and encampments in the `Arava, an area which had been quiet for months. The start of the attacks coincided with the establishment of an Arab Legion base at Gharandal, about fifty kilometres north of `Aqaba. Israel suspected that local Legion commanders were organizing or at least supporting the attacks—in the largest of which, an ambush on 21 September along the Sodom-Hatzeva road, five Israelis were wounded. Ramati, indeed, suspected that Amman was behind the attacks, hoping to halt the development of the region 'by discouraging Israeli civilians from settling and working there'. Ramati believed that some of the bedouin carrying out the raids were motivated by revenge for past Israeli harassment.

Jordanian officials denied Legion complicity, and Jordan's MAC representative 'emphasized informally that all the recent incidents had been

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[6] Ibid., entry for 5 July 1951, BGA.

[7] 'Facts Received by Jordan Legation, London, from Jordan Government, Concerning Violations of Armistice Agreement', 14 July 1951, PRO FO 371-98490; A. D. Fritzlan (Amman) to State Dept., 4 Aug. 1951, enclosing an Arab Legion report, 'Resumption of Israel Border Hostilities against Jordan—July 1951', describing the raids on Khirbet al Najjar, Husan, Al Midya, Budrus, and Wadi Fukin, NA RG 59, State Dept. Records, LM 60, Palestine and Israel, Foreign Affairs, Roll 2; Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 12 July 1951, BGA.

[8] 'Report on Informal Meetings of Israel and HJK MAC Members on the 17th and 18th July', S. Ramati to M. Makleff, etc., undated (but from 19 or 20 July 1951), ISA FM 2431/9.

[9] Report on IJMAC meeting, 23 Oct. 1951, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-45.

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carried out by Mufti bands organised in the Sinai and in the Gaza Strip, and sent to create incidents on the Jordan border with a view to worsening Israel-HJK [i.e. Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan] relations'.

The attacks in the `Arava duly triggered a response—against the semibedouin village of As Sail, at the southern end of the Dead Sea. On the nights of 24 and 25 September IDF patrols blew up three of the village's houses or huts, killing a 40-year-old woman and her 12-year-old daughter in the first attack.[10]

What followed was rather unusual. On 26 September a group of Israeli officers, accompanied by UN observers, crossed the border to Sail and 'expressed . . . regret for the tragic loss' of life. Ramati promised that, if the Legion and the villagers restrained the trouble-makers, he, for his part, would restrain the 'angry . . . [Israeli] residents' who had raided Sail. He proposed a formal *sulha* (forgiveness and reconciliation) feast between the Israeli potash plant workers in Sodom and the Sail inhabitants—'with perhaps an exchange of presents to the relatives of the dead and wounded on both sides'.[11] It is unclear whether the feast took place, but the IDF raids, coupled with the IJMAC officers' efforts, quieted the area for many months.

Elsewhere, the borders continued to fester. In September and October 1951 a number of Israeli soldiers were killed by mines along the Gaza border.[12] The IDF responded fiercely. On the night of 20 October two companies of Battalion 79 (7th Brigade) troops mounted Operation Yegev, an attack on a cluster of houses in the eastern suburbs of Gaza city. Dozens of Palestinians were killed and injured, and several dozen houses and an ice factory were blown up or set alight: 'The conflagration made a deep impression, depressing and frightening at the same time. It seemed as if all of Gaza was burning. Troublesome Gaza, home of saboteurs and attackers of Israel, had been punished,' recalled one of the IDF company commanders, Moshe Bar-Kochba. There were no Israeli casualties. According to Bar-Kochba, the raid resulted in a 'long period' of quiet along the border, and 'the raids on and thefts from [the Israeli settlements] ceased'. And the raid had had another, important effect: it had raised the battalion's morale;

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[10] Report on IJMAC meeting, 4 Oct. 1951, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-45; 'Inquiry on Case of 5 Israelis Wounded at MR.18470384 on the 21st of Sept. 1951,' Ramati, undated (but from 26 or 27 Sept. 1951), ISA FM 2431/9. Ramati also suspected that British Intelligence was using the bedouin marauders or the local Legionnaires to ascertain 'what natural resources had been found [by Israel] in the progress of our development schemes'.

[11] 'Inquiry', Ramati, ISA FM 2431/9.

[12] 'Case No. 5', UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-94.

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> [mere] conscripts had become warriors . . . A new spirit had entered the troops . . . [which was] embodied in new relations among themselves and between them and their officers—relations created only by a successful combat operation.[13]

Apparently as part of Operation Yegev, Dayan ordered the IDF area commander along the strip north of the Gaza border to round up two dozen *muhzakim* from the local kibbutzim and blow up a well and water pump near Beit Hanun, and a nearby two-storey house. Reis's 'troops' blew up the well and pump (after taking two or three Arabs prisoner, and subsequently killing one or two of them) but did not blow up the house.[14]

A few months later, following a renewal of infiltrator depredations, Bar-Kochba's armoured infantry company raided an encampment of the Nabahin bedouin tribe in the Gaza Strip, near the Bureij refugee camp. On the night of 6 January 1952 the company attacked with light weapons and grenades a cluster of thirty tents and a nearby Egyptian army post. 'The [IDF] riflemen were equipped with bayonets, used during the takeover and search of the tents, to save ammunition and avoid endangering neighbouring [IDF] squads.' But the bedouin tents did not burn well as a result of the night's rain. Altogether, some fifteen Arabs were killed, 'some of them with bayonets, and some twenty tents were burnt'. The raiding force suffered no casualties.[15]

Beit Jala

But the most troublesome sectors during the second half of 1951 and early 1952 remained the Jerusalem Corridor and the Hebron area foothills, along the Jordanian border. The rape-murder of Leah Feistinger (see Chapter 2) in December 1951 sparked calls for revenge against the suspected perpetrators, refugees from Walaj a who had committed a similar

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[13] Bar-Kochba, *Merkavot*, 105-11. According to the US military attaché in Tel Aviv, the IDF claimed to have 'no knowledge of alleged attack' (military attaché (Tel Aviv) to Army Dept., 29 Oct. 1951, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 3).

[14] Interview with Yitzhak Reis, Yad Mordechai, 14 Oct. 1991, and interview with Yehuda Shahor (Shwartz), Erez, 14 Oct. 1991. There are major discrepancies in their two accounts (highlighting the general pitfalls of oral history): Reis said that several of the raiders, from Kibbutz Or HaNer, had taken two Arabs prisoner—a father and son—killing them both when they tried to escape. Shahor recalled that three Arabs—a father and two sons—had been taken prisoner and that one had been killed when he attacked one of the Israelis, who were from 9Mefalsim (not Or HaNer). Reis says that he did not blow up the house because (*a*) another senior officer had 'advised' him not to, and (*b*) he had heard children's voices coming out of the house. Dayan, according to Reis, subsequently threatened to try him for disobedience but, a few days later, reconsidered and called off the trial.

[15] Bar-Kochba, *Merkavot*, 113-19.

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crime the previous February and were living in Beit Jala, near Bethlehem.[16] The reprisal took place on the night of 6/7 January 1952, Christmas Eve in the Eastern churches. An IDF platoon attacked three of Beit Jala's outlying houses with light weapons and grenades, and then blew up two of the houses while their occupants were still inside. Six people, including two girls, aged 7 and 12, and two women, were killed, and three persons, including an 8-year-old boy, were seriously injured.[17]

The raiders left behind leaflets, in Arabic, saying:

> On 4/12/1951 some persons from among the inhabitants of Beit Jala killed a Jewish girl in the neighbourhood of Bayit VeGan, after committing against her an unpardonable crime. What we have done now is the penalty for that ugly crime. We shall not stand idly by in the face of such crimes. In our quiver there are always arrows for [such criminals]. Let those who can, heed this warning . . .[18]

The chairman of the IJMAC, Colonel Bennett de Ridder, privately called the Beit Jala raid 'a shameful act of terrorism'.[19] At the ensuing emergency meeting of the IJMAC on 8 January, Ramati proposed four measures to alleviate the situation: (1) The passage by Jordan of a law making infiltration illegal and punishable with stiff prison sentences. (2) The removal of refugee communities from the border area, and their orderly rehabilitation and employment. (3) Demarcation of the frontier. (4) The return by the Jordanian authorities of stolen Israeli property. He went on to say that the only adequate answer to terrorism during the past fifty years had been

> [counter]-terror, and if an 18-year-old girl is raped and carved up, we [should not] be surprised if those who knew her decide to respond, especially when the criminals are known to them. . . . We would not be surprised if you find that the [perpetrators] live in the houses that were attacked.

But he denied IDF involvement 'in this sad affair'. The alleged perpetrators

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[16] Ramati to deputy CGS, etc., 27 Dec. 1951, ISA FM 2949/16; Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 5 July 1951, BGA: ('Motke [Makleff] proposes an operation against the refugees from Walaja . . . living in Beit Jala'). Western diplomats were not convinced that the Feistinger rape-murder was the work of infiltrators. In Apr. 1953 the US consul-general in Jerusalem wrote: 'It was never shown that the act was not committed by her Israeli boy-friend' (S. R. Tyler jun. to State Dept., 1 Apr. 1953, NA RG 59, Roll 2).

[17] 'Facts Received by Jordan Legation, London, from Jordan Government, Concerning Violations of Armistice Agreement', Jordan Legation (London), 14 Jan. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490. Commander E. H. Hutchison, a senior UN observer, vividly described what he saw at Beit Jala the day after the raid in his memoirs (*Violent Truce*, 12-16).

[18] Complaint by Jordan, 8 Jan. 1952, and UN observer's investigation report (Comdt. G. Bouvet to Col. Bennett L. de Ridder UN, chairman of IJMAC), 8 Jan. 1952, ISA FM 2432/1.

[19] De Ridder to Riley, 8 Jan. 1952, UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0-1.

of the rape-murder were named as Said Salah Jam`an, Jamil Muhammad Muharrab, and Muhammad Mansi. (None died in the Israeli raid—though at least three of the dead and two of the wounded were Mansi family members.) Israel voted with Jordan and de Ridder in condemning the raid.[20]

The Jordanian authorities believed that the Beit Jala raid highlighted a 'divergence of policy' in the Israeli government, between Moderates and hardliners. As Ahmad Bey Touqan, the Jordanian delegate to the IJMAC, put it: 'The Israeli Foreign Minister [Sharett] wished to follow a relatively moderate policy but . . . the army had the opposite intention . . . [and] the army policy appeared in the ascendant.'[21] But the British ambassador to Tel Aviv disputed the idea of any rift between Moderates and hard-liners, Foreign Ministry and IDF.

> I have the impression [he wrote in July 1952] that the [Foreign] Ministry . . . the army . . . the [Israeli] MAC delegation, the police and all the others concerned on the Israeli side work very closely together, are subject to co-ordinated policy instructions which they carry out to the letter . . .[22]

But despite the obvious efficiency of the raiders and the apparent synchronization of the raid with the 6 January raid on the bedouin encampment near Bureij in the Gaza Strip and a smaller raid against a house in Imwas, in the Latrun Salient, in which one Arab villager was injured, Beit Jala left a spoor of uncertainty about its authorship among Western observers. As the counsellor at the British Embassy in Tel Aviv wrote: 'If [the raids] are not carded out by Israeli troops (and we are inclined to think they are not), they must be carried out by the inhabitants of the defensive border settlements . . .'[23]

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[20] 'Report on the Emergency Session of the MAC that Took Place on 8.1.1952 at 16:30 hours', Maj. A. Mitaki to deputy CGS's bureau, etc., ? Jan. 1952, ISA FM 2432/1.

[21] A. R. Walmsley (Jerusalem) to M. T. Walker, British Legation, Amman, 9 Jan. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490. The British, misunderstanding the workings of Israeli decision-making, momentarily believed that Ramati himself might have been behind the Beit Jala raid. The British ambassador to Tel Aviv, Francis Evans, mistakenly reported to London that the raids were 'organised at a lower [i.e. non-ministerial] level, possibly by Ramati himself' (Evans to FO, 11 Jan. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490 E1091/2). A minor upshot of the raid was British pressure on Israel to replace Ramati on IJMAC ('Israel-Jordan Border Incidents', J. C. Wardrop, Eastern Department FO, 2 Feb. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490 E1091/12).

[22] Evans to A. D. M. Ross, Eastern Department, FO, 28 July 1952, PRO FO 371-98492.

[23] J. E. Chadwick (Tel Aviv) to Wardrop, 14 Jan. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490; Evans to FO, 16 Jan. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490 E1091/2. In early 1952 Western diplomats apparently still believed what Israeli officials told them. Evans had spoken of the 'tacit acceptance' of the Beit Jala raid by 'the Israeli authorities'.

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'There seems to be no evidence to support the Jordan contention that "all the attacks are by regular military forces",' wrote another British official.[24]

The raid prompted speculation among foreign observers about the purposes of Israel's border policy. De Ridder thought that Israel was trying to provoke full-scale hostilities with Jordan, perhaps with the aim of territorial aggrandisement. Glubb, taking a more Machiavellian tack, believed that Jerusalem wanted 'a somewhat disturbed frontier' in order to persuade its public to accept the rigours of Israeli life by 'constantly' crying 'that the enemy is at the gates'. Moreover, he argued, the Israelis had a psychological need to bully their weaker neighbours.[25]

The British Embassy in Tel Aviv seemed to accept the raids at face value, 'as simple reprisals, designed to make Arab infiltration unpopular in the Arab villages', to force the Jordanians to agree to a proper demarcation of the frontier, and, perhaps, to agree to 'a settlement'.[26] The ambassador, implicitly defending Israel's policy, cited the Israeli comparison of IDF raids with British reprisals against Egyptian terrorists in the Suez Canal zone.[27] The embassy counsellor, J. E. Chadwick, explicitly compared the IDF's policy of killing infiltrators along the borders with the killing of Egyptians by 'the sentries who patrol the British Ordnance Depots in the Canal Zone'.[28]

Yet Whitehall was unhappy with Israel's retaliatory policy: 'Their belief that toughness pays in their dealings with the Arabs is based on a misunderstanding of the latter's character. Their raids may temporarily have cowed the infiltrators but if repeated will provoke . . . counter measures.' And that process could lead to an explosion. The Foreign Office felt that Britain could not stand idly by 'while innocent citizens of our ally [Jordan] are butchered'.[29] After Beit Jala, Whitehall, at Jordanian prompting, toyed with the idea of making formal 'representations' to Tel

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[24] Brief by C. M. Pirie-Gordon for Strang's meeting with Hani al Hashem, the Jordanian *chargé d'affaires* in London, 29 Jan. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490 E1091/10; K. Katz, Foreign Ministry, Research Dept. to E. Elath, Israel Minister to London, 4 Feb. 1952, ISA FM 2402/ 12. Katz's cable, which had an ultra-high security classification, gave a detailed description of the Strang-al Hashem meeting. It was probably based on an intercept of British or Jordanian cables. At the meeting, al Hashem at first invoked the Tripartite Declaration and the Anglo-Jordanian defence pact. When Strang indicated that Britain did not take the Beit Jala raid quite so seriously and, in any event, did not regard Israeli official military participation in the raid as proven, al Hashem backtracked, and asked only that Britain pressure Israel to end the retaliatory strikes. Strang said that Britain would 'use its influence.'

[25] Chadwick to Wardrop, 14 Jan. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490; 'A Note on the Situation in Jordan, 1st July 1952', Glubb, 1 July 1952, PRO FO 371-98861.

[26] Evans to FO, 16 Jan. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490 E1091/2E; Evans to Ross, 28 July 1952, PRO FO 371-98492.

[27] Evans to Ross, 1 Feb. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490 E1091/13.

[28] Chadwick to G. H. Baker, Eastern Department, FO, 31 Jan. 1953, PRO FO 371-104777 ER1091/25.

[29] FO to British Embassy, Tel Aviv, 12 Feb. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490.

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Aviv. But the British Embassy there advised against, and the idea was shelved. But the British began to press for Ramati's removal.[30]

Washington, on the other hand, went ahead with formal representations to Tel Aviv, the American consul in Jerusalem calling the raid 'open, organised and provocative brutality'.[31] The State Department told Israel that, while the United States understood its difficulties stemming from infiltration, the 'military excursions by Israel into Jordan or other neigh-bouring states [for the] purpose [of] shooting people or destroying property appeared to Dept as extremely grave violations Armistice Agreement which c[ou]ld not be justified under any circumstances'. Secretary of State Acheson instructed the Tel Aviv Embassy to tell the Israelis that such raiding was in 'strong contrast' to Israel's professed interest in an 'amicable settlement with Arabs'. Such 'brutal . . . terror tactics' would result in a deterioration of relations with the Arab states. Also, the Jewish minorities in the Arab states, 'such . . . as Iraq', might be adversely affected, wrote Acheson.[32]

US Ambassador to Tel Aviv Monnett Davis initially informed Acheson that Beit Jala was the result of the 'military influence' in Tel Aviv getting the 'upper hand' and unleashing 'actions quite inconsistent with [the] avowed policy [of the] Israel Government'. The 'dominant military clique' took a cynical view of the moderates' efforts to make peace. The implication was that moderates like Eban had opposed the retaliatory raids but had been overruled or ignored.[33] But when Davis confronted Foreign Minister Sharett and made his representations, on 23 January, Sharett was unrepentant, reiterating '[the] familiar doctrine that [the] language of

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[30] FO to British Embassy, Tel Aviv, 2 Feb. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490; Evans to FO, 22 Feb. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490 E1091/19; FO to British Embassy, Tel Aviv, 12 Feb. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490. Chadwick spoke about Ramati to Shiloah, director of the Mossad, on 20 Feb.

Shiloah claimed that Ramati was a good soldier, honest and intelligent, but sensitive . . . about the personal attacks on him. . . . Shiloah said that any representative on an Armistice Commission must make use of any loophole to defend his country's position. Ramati's predecessor, Brigadier Dayan, had perhaps been even more skilful at this than Ramati, [and] had been smoother and more urbane.

In any event, Shiloah informed Chadwick that 'Ramati would shortly be removed from his present job . . . in the normal course of posting' (Evans to FO, 22 Feb. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490 E1091/19).

[31] Tyler to SecState, 8 Jan. 1952, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2; and Tyler to State Dept., 12 Jan. 1952, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan, Box 6.

[32] 'Memorandum', unsigned, 23 Jan. 1952, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Arab States; SecState to Tel Aviv (Embassy), 15 Jan. 1952, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan, Box 6.

[33] Davis to SecState, 16 Jan. 1952, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan, Box 6.

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reprisals is [the] only one Arabs seem to understand . . .'.[34] Indeed, Sharett also 'tartly' asked the American whether the United States had made similar 'representations' in the Arab capitals.[35]

But, at least in the short term, the Beit Jala raid considerably diminished Arab infiltration along the Jordanian-Israeli frontier and co-operation increased between Jordanian and Israeli security forces. According to Ramati, in the six weeks after Beit Jala infiltration decreased by 75 per cent,[36] due to intensified Jordanian patrolling and the raid's deterrent effect on Jordanian villagers. Washington acknowledged these short-term benefits of the retaliatory strikes. But, still, these were an 'unwarranted method [of] dealing with infiltration,' wrote Acheson.

> While such action may reduce infiltration temporarily, it [is] bound [to] have wider repercussions both here [in Israel and Jordan] and in Arab states. Continued action will increase pressure [on] Jordan Govt. [to] do something [and] retaliate and will further postpone final settlement . . . Israel and Arab States.[37]

American officials later suggested that the improvement in Israeli-Jordanian border relations following Beit Jala was in great measure due to America's 'representations'.[38] Jordan asked that Washington make these public. This would 'help prevent resumption [by Israel of] former brutal treatment [of] infiltrators', and, according to Amman, would strengthen the hand of the 'moderate civilian element' in Tel Aviv against the 'military faction now dictating frontier policy'.[39]

The Beit Jala raid was to have an ugly postscript; the Mansis certainly wanted revenge. On the night of 3/4 February 1952 an Israeli civilian was murdered in A1 Maliha, and three weeks later, on the night of 29 February, two Israeli watchmen were murdered by infiltrators in the Jerusalem suburb of `Ein Kerem (formerly the Arab village of `Ein Karim). Ramati said that 'the police suspected Mansi' in the Maliha murder.[40]

In the wake of Beit Jala, it appeared that Israel's policy of 'forcing a showdown' had succeeded, at least in some measure. Evans argued that

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[34] Davis to SecState, 23 Jan. 1952, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Arab States.

[35] Evans to FO, 12 Feb. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490 E1091/18.

[36] Tyler to SecState, 28 Feb. 1952, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[37] D. Acheson to Amman and Tel Aviv, 30 Jan. 1952, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[38] Tyler to SecState, 28 Feb. 1952, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[39] G. A. Drew (Amman) to SecState, 4 Feb. 1952, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2. One of the reasons for the sharp American reaction to Beit Jala was that it was compounded by the simultaneous IDF raid on the outskirts of Bureij in the Gaza Strip (Tyler to State Dept., 12 Jan. 1952, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan, Box 6).

[40] 'Report on an Informal Meeting with Ahmad Bey Touqan that Took Place at the Mandelbaum Gate on 6.2.52', Ramati, 12 Feb. 1952, ISA FM 2432/1; 'Report on Meetings with Ahmed Bey Touqan that Took Place on 10 and 12 Feb. 1952 in Jalame and in Tulkarm', Ramati, ? Feb. 1952, ISA FM 2432/1.

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the Israeli contention, that 'the Arabs only understand force', seemed to be supported by Middle Eastern realities. 'I do not see that we are in any position to criticize Israel's policy . . . You may say that toughness is not the way to handle the Arabs, but to all appearances the line adopted by the Israelis has proved rewarding . . .'[41]

The immediate upshot of Israel's policy was the signing of the LCA of 27 January 1952, which prohibited firing on infiltrators, unless they resisted arrest, or across the border except in self-defence, and provided for daily meetings of local commanders at nine fixed points along the border; the prompt return of captured infiltrators; the return of stolen property; and the solution of all problems between local commanders (rather than at the IJMAC).[42]

But the effects of the raid, the Jordanian clampdown on infiltration, and the implementation of the LCA failed to reduce infiltration substantially for long. By the end of February, according to Israeli officials, infiltration was as high as before the signing of the LCA. All that had changed, said the Israelis, was that would-be infiltrators were now paying Jordanian frontier guards one and a half dinars per sortie for 'turning a blind eye' instead of ten piastres.[43] Three months after the signing, IDF intelligence concluded that it

> did not produce the hoped-for results . . . Substantial changes in irregular activity [i.e. infiltration] along the Jordanian border . . . were not seen, though there was no change for the worse. . . . Bribe-taking and assistance to infiltrators by the National Guard continued. Infiltrators were not punished sufficiently. . . . Illegal cultivation of lands [in Israel] continued. There was insufficient propaganda among the border villages to prevent infiltration and no steps were taken to move the refugee concentrations away from the borders.[44]

Indeed, Israeli officials argued that the LCA itself encouraged infiltration in so far as the IDF troops' freedom to fire on infiltrators had been curtailed. Eight Israeli civilians were killed by infiltrators during the agreement's first three months, and Jordanian courts still handed down

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[41] Evans to Ross, 1 Feb. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490 E1091/13; Evans to FO, 22 Feb. 1952; PRO FO 371-98490 E1091/19; Evans to Ross, 28 July 1952, PRO FO 371-98492.

[42] Reuven Dafni to FM director general, 4 Feb. 1952, ISA FM 2402/12. See also 'On 1.2.52 an Agreement of Co-operation with the Jordanians went into Effect to Reduce Infiltration', memo., unsigned (but probably by IDF Intelligence Department), undated (probably from early May 1952), ISA FM 2402/12; Evans to Ross, 1 Feb. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490 E1091/13.

[43] Evans to FO, 11 Mar. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490 E1091/21.

[44] 'Co-operation Agreement', ISA FM 2432/2. This memo. differentiates between the various sectors of the Israel-Jordan border, saying that during Feb.-Apr. 1952, in which the agreement was in effect, infiltration and incidents 'decreased substantially' in the northern Samaria border area, while in western Samaria, Latrun, and the Jerusalem Corridor there was no substantial change.

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light sentences for infiltration: 'The longest sentence . . . is stated to be . . . sixty days imprisonment.'[45] American, British, and UN pressure eventually persuaded Israel to renew the agreement and a new version was signed on 14 May 1952, the difference between the old and the new being that the clauses prohibiting the opening of fire on infiltrators and the non-submission of complaints to the MAC were dropped.[46]

The 1952 LCAs contributed to only a slight decrease in infiltration. Israel remained unhappy with Jordanian implementation and charged that Jordanian patrolling was lax. In effect, the LCAs led to only a marginal and temporary curtailment of IDF retaliatory policy.[47]

Idna, Rantis, and Falama

The respite in infiltration triggered by Beit Jala was brief. On 18 March 1952 a night-watchman was stabbed to death near Tel Yeroham in the Negev; on 14 April an Israeli vehicle was ambushed south of `Ein Husb (Hatzeva), in the `Arava. Two passengers were killed and two wounded. The ambushers' tracks led to Jordan.[48] Israeli intelligence believed these attacks were the work of Jordanian bedouin and that Ibrahim Salah, a *mukhtar* at Sail, was 'linked' to them. A murder also occurred in Jerusalem on 4 May 1952.[49]

Periodically, the IDF retaliated. On 20 May a patrol planted a bomb next to a house on the outskirts of Qaffin, north of the West Bank town of Tulkarm. The bomb killed a woman and three of her children, aged 18 months, 5, and 6, and their 16-year-old uncle. A note left by the raiders said the attack was a reprisal for the murder by infiltrators of a Jewish woman near Hadera two days before. (Two weeks before, on 7 May, an IDF patrol had reportedly penetrated a kilometre into Jordan near the same village and fired on harvesters, killing a 60-year-old woman 'too feeble to run'.)[50]

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[45] Evans to Eden, 17 May 1952, PRO FO 371-98485 E1081/4.

[46] Evans to Eden, FO, 17 May 1952, PRO FO 371-98485 E1081/4; 'Agreement on Measures to Curb Infiltration between Israel and Jordan,' signed by Ramati, Bey Touqan and de Ridder, undated (but from 14 May 1952), ISA FM 2592/18.

[47] Ramati exaggerated when he described Israeli policy in 1952 as one of 'extreme self-restraint' ('Report of Meeting of MAC on 8.10.52,' Ramati to the IDF General Staff officer for MACs, etc., 3 Nov. 1952, ISA FM 2432/3). According to Wallach and Lissak (eds.) (*Atlas*, 113), while Israel mounted 25 retaliatory strikes in fiscal 1951 (Apr. 1951-Mar. 1952), it mounted 22 strikes in fiscal 1952—hardly indicative of a policy of 'extreme self-restraint'.

[48] 'Arab infiltration into Israel,' ed. Z. Neeman, Foreign Ministry Research Dept., 10 Jul. 1952, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph.

[49] 'Report on the Meetings of Ahmad Bey Touqan at Sail on 13.5.1952 and at Mandelbaum [Gate] 15.5.1952', Ramati to head of IDF Intelligence Dept., undated, ISA FM 2432/2.

[50] Tyler to State Dept., 22 May 1952, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan, Box 6; 'Apr.-May Report on Israeli-Jordanian Border', A.S.C. Fuller (Jerusalem) to State Dept., 6 June 1952, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2; Arab Legion memo., undated, PRO FO 371-98492.

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On 14 July bedouin infiltrators from Jordan killed five Israeli watchmen at Timna, north of Eilat. The IDF responded with two raids. On 31 July a patrol crossed into Jordan, killed sixteen camels, and burnt the carcasses to deny the bedouin their hides. On 6 August an IDF patrol in the same general area, at Jabal Thurbah, fired on Jordanian policemen. Two IDF soldiers were killed in the exchange.[51]

With Israel either denying or not claiming responsibility, the Jordanians were in some confusion about the raiders' identity. Indeed, the Jordanian defence minister appears to have believed that the raids 'were probably not [by] actual members of the Israel armed forces, but [by] reservists who had been demobilized and who were acting as guards to kibbutzim'.[52]

The last few months of 1952 witnessed an increase in infiltration incidents and Israeli casualties along the border with Jordan. As the British Embassy in Tel Aviv reported in October:

> It has lately become more noticeable that a constant stream of marauders is coming over the border, especially in the Jerusalem Corridor. Practically every day for a fortnight now the papers have reported one or more incidents . . . kibbutz animals stolen, hospital watchmen shot at, grenades thrown . . . The residents of the Corridor are certainly showing signs of alarm and are demanding better protection . . .[53]

The situation in the Jerusalem Corridor and the Hebron foothills was 'terrible. Infiltrator attacks: one killed in `Ajjur; a Kiryat `Anavim man killed . . . [infiltrators] penetrated the kibbutz in Beit Nattif and stole cattle. Two days ago [infiltrators] penetrated [Kibbutz] Beit Govrin. Took a man and threw him into a sewage cistern.'[54] IDF Intelligence reported a steep increase in infiltration, with the number of clashes between troops or settlement guards and infiltrators in the Latrun Salient and in the Jerusalem Corridor doubling.[55] The response was a botched raid on 3 November 1952, when a small force (from 79th Battalion, 7th Brigade) attacked Idna, in the Hebron foothills, encountered National Guard pickets, and retreated to Israeli territory without carrying out its mission.[56]

Israeli officials tended to link the deterioration along the Israeli-Jordanian border to the conference of the four Arab MAC delegations held in Amman in November 1952. The delegations had vied with each

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[51] R. Parker (Jerusalem) to SecState, 8 Aug. 1952, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[52] G. W. Furlonge (Amman) to Sir J. Bowker (London), 12 Sept. 1952, PRO FO 371-98474 E1072/35.

[53] Tel Aviv to Ross, 1 Oct. 1952, PRO FO 371-98475 E1072/48.

[54] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 1 Oct. 1952, BGA.

[55] 'Activity on the Borders: Summaries and Conclusions for the Month of Oct. 1952', IDF Intelligence Dept., 14 Nov. 1952, ISA FM 2428/7.

[56] Wallach and Lissak (eds.), *Atlas*, 97.

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other in anti-Israeli pronouncements and denounced UNTSO Chief of Staff Riley as pro-Israeli.[57]

The increase in violent infiltrations inevitably resulted in periodic breakdowns of the LCAs and the renewal of the retaliatory strikes. Israeli dissatisfaction led to the renegotiation of the May 1952 LCA and its signature, in revised form, on 13 November and, again, in amended form, on 29 December. The 13 November agreement called on local authorities to curb infiltration; to hand over captured infiltrators and stolen property; and to keep fire on infiltrators 'to a strict minimum' and to prohibit such fire during daylight hours 'unless they resist arrest'. The accord prohibited firing across the lines except in self-defence.[58]

Renewed Israeli misgivings about the LCA's implementation—'from the outset it was abundantly clear that local Jordanian commanders were not competent to undertake even the simplest tasks needed to keep the agreement'—led to its partial suspension in January 1953. 'By January 1953 it was obvious that [the] Jordanians had no intention of allowing the agreement to be carried out,' wrote one Israeli official.[59] The LCA was renegotiated and signed on 8 June 1953, on a three-month basis, for the first time explicitly prohibiting retaliatory strikes: 'No military forces or armed civilians of either party shall undertake any aggressive action across the Demarcation Line against the people and military forces of the other party.'[60]

In January 1953, along with the suspension of the LCA, Israel renewed its retaliatory strikes following a series of infiltrator raids. Israel suspected that National Guardsmen and local Arab Legion officers were aiding and abetting the new infiltration to sow insecurity along the border. One dead infiltrator was found with a document showing that he was on official Jordanian business; a number of captives confessed that they had been guided across the line by National Guardsmen; others spoke of Legion Officers having bribed them to cross the border and having promised them covering fire if pursued back into Jordan. Sharett told the British ambassador that Israel had reliable information that these raids 'were organized and financed by [Arab Legion] headquarters [in] Nablus'.[61]

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[57] 'Deterioration of Jordan-Israel Relations: Worsening of Border Situation: Israel May be Compelled to Abandon Passive Defence Role—Delegate Tells Armistice Commission', Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 21 Jan. 1953, PRO FO 371-104765; and Chadwick to Baker, 31 Jan. 1953, PRO FO 371-194777 ER1091/25.

[58] 'Agreement to Reduce and Solve Incidents along the Demarcation Line', PRO FO 371-104784.

[59] 'Local Commanders Agreement', by A.E. (probably Arye Eilan), 21 Feb. 1955, ISA FM 2429/8 bet, which summarized the LCA experience, 1951-5.

[60] Text of 8 June 1953 LCA, ISA FM 2402/12.

[61] M. B. Davis (Tel Aviv) to SecState, 30 Jan. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

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Israel pointedly warned Jordan to rein in the infiltrators before it was too late.[62]

The renewed reprisals got off to a very poor start. On the night of 22/3 January 1953 (Operation Ofra), the IDF struck simultaneously at two targets. Two paratroop (890th Battalion) companies struck at Idna, with orders to blow up houses and kill their inhabitants. Fired upon on the outskirts of the village by National Guardsmen, the paratroops withdrew without accomplishing their mission, suffering one killed and another missing. At the same time, an infantry company of the Giv`ati Brigade's 54th Battalion attacked the village of Falama, north-east of Qalqilya, with similar orders. A barbed wire fence stalled them on the outskirts of the village, and, in the ensuing skirmish with National Guardsmen, the Israelis lost one dead (the body was left behind) and five wounded, and withdrew without accomplishing their mission. Terming the raid 'unprovoked', the Jordanians subsequently said that 'Falama is known to be one of the quietest villages along the . . . border. . . . The majority of the inhabitants are old and infirm.'[63] They feared—or said they feared—that the raids were a first stage in an Israeli grand design for 'expansion eastwards'.[64]

The twin failure severely shook the IDF. General Haim Laskov, the IAF commander, scored the raids as revealing 'poor combat training'. Dayan, then head of the General Staff Branch, was astonished and furious: the failures were due to a lack of tenacity, he said. He issued the following order to all units: 'Every IDF officer who is deterred from carrying out his mission before most, or at least half, of his troops are hit will be summarily dismissed.'[65]

At least partly to wipe out the 'shame', on the night of 28/9 January the IDF launched a new assault on Falama, simultaneously attacking the village of Rantis, south of Qalqilya. The operation was called *Omer VaOmar*. The two villages, incidentally, were rather incautiously marked out as potential targets in a letter sent two days before by Israel's IJMAC delegate to a UN official. Lieutenant-Colonel Haim Gaon had written: 'Most marauders come from Jordan villages of Tulkarm [district] . . . *Rantis* and *Falama* . . . where thieves' markets had been established.'[66]

After a preliminary mortar barrage, the Giv`ati units moved in on Falama, intending, apparently, to take over and blow up a large part of

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[62] 'Deterioration of Jordan-Israel Relations', PRO FO 371-104765.

[63] 'Report of Incident on Jordan-Israel Border during Night 22/3 Jan. 1953', Arab Legion HQ, undated, in NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2; Milstein, *HaTzanhanim*, i. 137, 155-6. Both Dayan, *Avnei*, 112, and Milstein misdate the attack 25/6 January.

[64] j. E. Green (Amman) to SecState, 29 Jan. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[65] Dayan, *Avnei*, 113; Teveth, *Dayan*, 384, 386.

[66] Tyler to SecState, 30 Jan. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

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the village.[67] But National Guard counterfire kept the Israelis at bay, and they occupied only a handful of houses on the village's outskirts, three of which were blown up. The village *mukhtar* was killed and seven Arabs were wounded before the Israelis beat a rather disorderly withdrawal, with seventeen wounded, and boxes of anti-tank rockets, unexploded Bangalore torpedoes, and TNT left behind.[68]

The paratroop company's attack on Rantis was equally inefficient. Held off by National Guard fire, the Israelis failed to reach the centre of the village, and blew up a house and a well on its outskirts. Two Arabs died and two were wounded, with no Israeli casualties.[69]

The raids, inept as they were, had political and military repercussions. Jordan's defence minister, Anwar Nusseibeh, called in the US Embassy's second-in-command: 'These people [i.e. the Israelis] are your protégés; you put them there. You can control them if you want.'[70] American diplomats around the Middle East warned Washington that Israel's actions were threatening America's position in the region. 'Increased hatred for Israel brings increased resentment against us . . . We cannot allow Israel to threaten our own interests in the whole region,' cabled one, urging Washington to 'caution' Israel.[71] Israel's minister in Washington was summoned to the State Department and told: 'Acts of reprisal against innocent people were not justified morally or from a practical point of view.'[72]

Jordan, invoking its defence treaty with Britain and the Tripartite Declaration, pressed Britain and the United States to restrain Israel. Nusseibeh specifically requested that Britain increase the number of its troops in Jordan.

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[67] Tyler to SecState, 29 Jan. 1953, in NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2. Tyler reported that 'from amount of TNT left behind [by the IDF] . . . it seems evident that patrol [i.e. raiders, had been] intent on demolishing village'.

[68] Green to SecState, 29 Jan. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2; Milstein, *HaTzanhanim*, i. 137-8; Dayan, *Avnei*, 112; Col. C. Herzog, military attaché, Israel Embassy, Washington, to IDF Intelligence Dept., 27 Feb. 1953, ISA FM 2949/4.

[69] Green to SecState, 29 Jan. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2; Green to State Dept., 2 Feb. 1953, enclosing Arab Legion reports on both Falama raids, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2; Wallach and Lissak (eds.), *Atlas*, 97; Glubb, *Soldier*, 302. Milstein (*HaTzanhanim*, i. 156) quotes the paratroops' commander, Yehuda Harari, as saying that Rantis was a success; that nine Arabs had died in the attack; and that a house was blown up in the centre of the village.
A third raid was apparently launched on the night of 28 Jan. 1953 into the Gaza Strip. An IDF squad shot and killed five persons, including three children (Tyler to SecState, 29 Jan. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2).

[70] Green to SecState, 1 Feb. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[71] Tyler to SecState, 29 Jan. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[72] 'Memorandum of Conversation', 30 Jan. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2. According to the Americans, Goitein had replied that 'he personally agreed that such attacks were morally wrong and, even from a practical point of view, he deplored such action'.

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Washington even-handedly pressed Jordan to curb the infiltrators and reprimanded Israel for its retaliatory policy, asking that it desist from further reprisals. The new US secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, cabled his missions in Tel Aviv and Amman:

> Is USG [US Government] therefore to assume that IG [Israel Government] will continue to flout friendly counsel and take matters into own hands? USG considers these raids grave danger to the security and stability of the area and if they are not expressly and clearly abandoned it must accordingly reserve its right to take appropriate action under the Tripartite Declaration.

and instructed the ambassador in Tel Aviv to present these thoughts to Sharett.[73] US diplomats in Amman feared that the Arab Legion would retaliate. Jordanian public opinion, inflamed by the raids, was angry with the Legion for failing to aid the raided villages. 'In Nablus and Tulkarm, the Arab Legion has been booed—something which has not been known to occur before,' the American ambassador in Amman reported.[74]

Britain, for its part, reassured Jordan—and informed Israel—that it was ready to fulfil its treaty obligations to Jordan. But the present situation did not warrant action, Whitehall added.[75]

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[73] R. Makins (Washington) to FO, 30 Jan. 1953, PRO FO 371-104765 ER1073/8; Green to SecState, 1 Feb. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2; Dulles to Amman and Tel Aviv, 9 Feb. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[74] Green to State Dept. 2 Feb. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[75] 'Monthly Situation Report for Jordan for the Month of Feb. 1953', Furlonge, Mar. 1953, PRO FO 371-104887; Evans to FO, 3 Feb. 1953, PRO FO 371-104777. The British 'did not . . . consider that Jordan was in imminent danger of attack'. HMG urged Amman to make greater efforts to curb infiltration. The Chiefs of Staffs Committee had pressed the British government to make 'immediate and strong representations' to Israel ('Extract from COS (53) 16.00 Meeting', 3 Feb. 1953, PRO FO 371-104777).

The representations had been urged by Glubb. During the early 1950s Glubb effectively functioned as an anti-Israeli 'lobbyist' in Whitehall. Despite his known eccentricities and emotionalism, his position as commander of the Arab Legion and trusted adviser to the Hashemite kings gave him almost unequalled stature as a Briton with intimate knowledge of the Arab scene and Arab thinking, Middle Eastern military and political realities, and the situation along the Israel-Jordan border. His network of long-standing friendships and contacts with senior British army officers and Middle East experts at the FO assured him a hearing, and he made ample use of this. He flooded Whitehall, sometimes directly and sometimes through the British legation in Amman, with position papers and memoranda. The events of 1948 and the immediate post-war years sharpened his animosity towards Israel and generated in him sympathy for the Palestinians (an emotion he had not felt before the first Israeli-Arab war). He seemed to lack any sympathy for Israel. His nine-page 'A Note on Refugee Vagrancy' from late Feb. 1953 (PRO FO 371-104778) was typical in asserting the almost complete blamelessness of the infiltrating refugees, who lived in 'dreary and sordid refugee camps'; he accused Israel of repeatedly massacring and murdering Palestinians and of seeking a *herrenvolk* relationship with the surrounding Arab peoples and states ('the conquistadores of Cortez and Pizarro can scarcely have been more haughty and callous to the natives than are the Israelis today'); and he conjectured that Israel was merely using the infiltration problem as a pretext to launch raids whose ultimate purpose was to spark a large-scale conflict in which Israel could conquer further Arab territory.

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The Arab Legion, partially reversing on its policy of concentrating its forces in the east, deployed two battalions along the West Bank border to deter fresh Israeli assaults, reassure the Jordanian border villagers of Amman's protection, and curb further infiltration into Israel.[76]

As most foreign observers had predicted,[77] Israel's retaliatory strikes failed to stop the infiltrator depredations. Indeed, as if responding to Falama and Rantis, on the night of 2 February 1953 Arab marauders blew up a section of the Tel-Aviv-Haifa railroad, opposite Qalqilya, in the heart of Israel.[78] By 28 February the British ambassador in Tel Aviv concluded that 'infiltration continues to be as bad as ever. . . The Israeli [retaliatory] policy . . . has been a total failure.'[79]

Debating Retaliation

The spasmodic, inept, and ineffective IDF raiding caused considerable soul-searching within the Israeli establishment, although political criticism of the retaliatory policy was very hesitant. The most strident critics were at the Foreign Ministry, where many senior officials were liberal-minded intellectuals of German or Anglo-Saxon origin. The ministry effectively functioned as a liaison between the Israeli government and the West, and its officials continually bore the brunt of, and inevitably were affected by, Western criticism.[80]

At a meeting of intelligence executives in early February 1953, Ya`ir Elgom, head of the Jordan desk in the Foreign Ministry Research Department, argued that

> most of Jordan's violations [of the armistice agreement]—were a reaction to our own violations. Jordan's secondary violations do not justify our sharp reprisals. . . . justice . . . was not on our side. This in itself may not be important, but it is so

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[76] Green to SecState, 14 Feb. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2; and US Dept., FM, to Eban, 8 Feb. 1953, ISA FM 2949/18. At their meeting on 5 Feb. 1953, Sharett told the US ambassador to Tel Aviv that he knew nothing about the second attack on Falama. See also British Embassy, Amman, to Eastern Department, FO, 14 Apr. 1953, PRO FO 371-104779; A. Eilan to G. Rafael, 4 Jan. 1954, ISA FM 2474/13: 'Ever since Falama, the Legion has been compelled to string itself out along the border—a military disposition Glubb certainly strives to avoid.'

[77] e.g., the British minister in Jordan wrote after Falama and Rantis that 'tough [Israeli] tactics will have the exact opposite effect to that which the Israelis desire' as they will not elicit Jordanian co-operation, which is necessary to curb infiltration (Furlonge to FO, 4 Feb. 1953, PRO FO 371-104777).

[78] Davis to SecState, 3 Feb. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[79] Evans to Ross, 28 Feb. 1953, PRO FO 371-104779.

[80] There was also a measure of soul-searching about and criticism of the policy within the IDF and Defence Ministry, but lack of accessible documentation makes it impossible to trace it accurately.

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> obvious that it will be difficult to hide it for long from the West. . . It is time that we reviewed our actions.[81]

In the IDF, the spectacle of their (relatively) powerful forces striking at (relatively) innocent Jordanian border villagers seemed ridiculous as well as unjust. And when this was compounded by the spectacle of bands of barely armed and ill-trained Jordanian militiamen putting the IDF to flight, the need for change became starkly obvious. As the IDF Intelligence Department put it at the start of 1953:

> During the past few months all our reprisal raids have ended in failure, lowering Israel's prestige in Arab eyes and causing other damage . . . The existing norm of retaliatory strikes against border villages must cease, as it does more harm than good.

The Department recommended increasing defensive measures, such as fences, minefields, and patrols; attacking 'economic targets' in Arab countries; and increasing 'personal terror and sabotage by [Israeli] agents'. It also recommended establishing 'operational squads' run by Special Duties Officers to be used against specific infiltrators and their controllers.[82]

At the 4 February 1953 meeting of IDF and Foreign Ministry intelligence officers, Lieutenant Colonel Avraham Tamir of the General Staff Branch said that the purpose of the reprisals was 'to cause instability in the other side, [and] the dispersion of [enemy] forces, [by compelling them] them to defend the various regions [of the West Bank]'. Retaliatory strikes, Tamir acknowledged, at best 'curtail infiltration [only] for a short time', while they could also trigger an escalation, leading to 'an explosion'.

Captain Ze`ev Biber (Bar-Lavi), head of the Jordan desk in IDF Intelligence Department/Research, said that the Arab Legion could do no more to curb infiltration. If Israel 'went too far' in its reprisals, the British and Jordanians might act together 'against us'. Elgom disputed the assertion that Jordan was behind the resurgence of infiltration and quoted from an intercepted memorandum by Nusseibeh:

> The IDF aggression—is a result of atrocious acts committed by refugees and [Jordanian] border villagers with the aim of robbery and murder in the Israeli area. I am sure [wrote Nusseibeh] that had severe measures been taken [by Jordan] along the borders . . . then the Israeli authorities would not have carried out such acts of aggression and retaliation. . . . Stricter supervision of infiltration is necessary.

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[81] 'The Infiltration into Israel in 1952 and the Recent Tension (Dec. 1952-Jan. 1953) along the Borders', protocol of meeting on 4 Feb. 1953 of IDF and FM intelligence executives, unsigned and undated, ISA FM 2402/12.

[82] 'Infiltration in 1952 (a Summary for the months Jan.-Nov.),' unsigned (but by IDF Intelligence Dept.), undated (but from early 1953), ISA FM 2428/4 aleph.

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Elgom distinguished between economic infiltration, which might be curbed by reprisals, and political-revenge-oriented infiltration, which retaliation would only encourage. In the long term, he argued, Israel's main goal was peace with its neighbours—and the retaliatory strikes were probably making that prospect more remote by 'causing intense feelings of bitterness and hatred that would not quickly be forgotten'. According to Elgom, retaliation 'dissipated the little goodwill that existed' in Jordan *vis-à-vis* Israel, and only a peace settlement would solve the infiltration problem. He added that Israel's defensive measures against infiltration were inadequate, and 'there is a lot to repair on this side of the border before we push aggressively across the border'. Israel chose its moments to retaliate inauspiciously and used exaggerated force, he concluded.

Lieutenant-Colonel Mordechai Gihon, head of IDF Intelligence Department/Research, retorted that Israel had no choice but to retaliate. Infiltration could be curbed by removing the refugees from the border areas, but for political reasons Jordan was not going to do this. Therefore, only the military option remained. It could not end infiltration completely, but it could reduce it, by hitting 'centres . . . [and] organizers' and by inducing the Great Powers to pressure the Arab states to curb it. Moreover, Israel had to take recourse to vigorous retaliatory strikes to make clear to the Arab states that it was not weak or 'declining'. The reprisals thus served the purpose of strategic deterrence. Of course, they might precipitate a Second Round. But if Israel refrained from reprisals, that Second Round would certainly ensue. So 'we must play with fire to put out the fire', concluded Gihon. The Foreign Ministry's Pessah Shin`ar argued that the reprisals were necessary to demonstrate Israel's strength to the West, which was becoming increasingly cognizant of the 'importance' of the Arab states.[83]

Two days before this meeting, senior Foreign Ministry officials reviewed the Jordan border policy, with Walter Eytan taking the most critical line: 'I am a heretic,' he declared. 'I don't see the point in the army's actions. I don't accept the army's contention that the Arabs only understand the language of force.' Eytan said that, had experience demonstrated the efficacy of the retaliatory strategy—well and good. But it was not so. Shortly after each retaliatory strike, the situation reverted to the *status quo ante*. Eytan said that there seemed to be no considered, guiding policy—only military reflexes:

[83] 'The Infiltration into Israel in 1952 and the Recent Tension (Dec. 1952-Jan. 1953) along the Borders', ISA FM 2402/12. Captain M. Avidan, the head of the Lebanese desk in Intelligence Department/Research, argued that time worked against Israel and that the Arab states were gaining in relative strength. The implicit message was that Israel should seek to precipitate a second round to crush the Arab armies before they became too strong. Elgom objected.

> The army is in a state of general ferment . . . Arabs infiltrate and steal, until someone in the army stands up and declares that a reprisal must be prepared . . . There is a thermometer and when the temperature reaches a certain point—the General Staff response is activated.

Eytan said that he had toured the border areas and discovered that the settlers there did not believe that the retaliatory strikes were of any use in curbing or reducing infiltration. In general, the settlements were poorly guarded—partly because the settlers knew that the government would replace any property stolen by infiltrators. Existing defensive measures should be reviewed, he said.

Defending the retaliatory policy, Sharett said: 'Whenever depredations reach a peak we must react—that is the policy.' This was not a matter of 'blind vengeance'. Reprisals deterred border villagers from infiltrating, prompted the Arab governments to curb infiltration, and raised the morale of Israeli border settlers and the IDF.

All speakers criticized the lack of IDF-ministry co-ordination, charging that the army often went ahead without taking ministry advice or even informing it. The army had carried out reprisals and had suspended the LCA with Jordan without even consulting the Foreign Ministry. This had 'created the impression that the army has one policy and the Foreign Ministry, another', said one official. Another suggested establishing a special, 'deniable' non-military force to carry out reprisals. The ministry's legal adviser, Shabtai Rosenne, thought that retaliatory policy was best left to the army's decision.[84]

The Israeli officials who were most affected by Western criticism of the retaliatory policy were the diplomats abroad. Eban, ambassador to Washington and the UN, wrote that, 'even if we have resolved in principle that we must react to the depredations on our borders, we must [carefully] choose the timing and the circumstances so that more is gained by the operation than lost'. The reprisals of the first weeks of 1953 had been badly timed, in his view, for the new Eisenhower Administration personnel and newly elected Congressmen and senators above all wanted peace and quiet as they started their jobs. Moreover, this was the time of year when Israel submitted its annual aid requests. Israel had not done nearly enough to prepare the ground for the raids—by listing the damage done by the infiltrators; by demonstrating that the villages raided were infiltrators' 'bases'; and by insisting that Israel was hitting 'those responsible for infiltration and not women and children'.[85]

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[84] 'Protocol of a Meeting that Took Place in the Foreign Ministry on 2.2.53.', ISA FM 4373/15.

[85] Eban to the director general (Tel Aviv), 16 Mar. 1953, ISA FM 2432/3. Eban, of course, knew that the great majority of the Arabs hit in IDF retaliatory strikes were not 'those responsible' for the attacks on Israel.

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Retaliating in Jerusalem

The American representations after Falama were taken to heart in Jerusalem. As Ben-Gurion implied in a letter to his fellow ministers, one reason for the expansion of the Border Police in early 1953 was the need to bolster defensive responses to infiltration. The retaliatory strikes both embittered Israeli-Arab relations and could harm 'our relations with the US and England, and, if at all possible, this must be avoided at all costs'.[86]

A period of relative restraint set in. Cross-border Israeli actions were limited to the occasional confiscation of herds (following thefts of Israeli herds),[87] and non-aggressive patrols and ambushes. More than two months passed before Israel launched new major reprisals.

But the borders were hardly quiet. There were repeated mining incidents during February-March 1953 along the Gaza frontier, which Israeli and Egyptian officials attributed to a new Palestinian 'underground' in the Strip. Egypt said that it 'could pose an equal danger to Israel and to Egypt'. Israel suspected that ex-Mufti Haj Amin al Husayni might be behind the attacks. The Egyptians asked the Israelis to supply proof and so provide Egypt with an excuse to deport him from his home near Cairo.[88]

On 5 April two IDF soldiers were murdered on their way home (and a third was wounded) near the settlement of Tel Mond, in the Coastal Plain. Infiltrator tracks led to the West Bank. Five days later, a Jewish mother and child were shot and wounded by infiltrators in their home in Kfar Saba, east of Tel Aviv.[89] A week later, on 17 April, two Jewish watchmen at Mevo Beitar, in the Jerusalem Corridor, were abducted across the line into Jordan and murdered by National Guardsmen. The following day an Arab Legionnaire fired a single shot into West Jerusalem, killing a Jewish woman. Two days later, on 20 April, Arab infiltrators broke into an apartment in Jerusalem's Kiryat Moshe district and murdered a rabbinical student and his niece.[90]

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[86] Ben-Gurion to members of Cabinet, 24 Mar. 1953, BGA.

[87] Furlonge to Bowker, 7 Apr. 1953, PRO FO 371-104779 ER1091/87. Furlonge, quoting Glubb, claimed that, during the previous fifteen months, Israel had stolen more Arab flocks and herds than the infiltrators had stolen from Israel.

[88] 'A Summary of Mining Incidents and Sabotage in the South During the Period 11.2.53. to 28.3.53', unsigned and undated, ISA FM 2592/18; 'Summary of Meetings with the Egyptians on 3.4.53 and 7.4.53. at Kilometre 95', Lt.-Col. B. Harman, chief Israel delegate to EIMAC, to IDF General Staff Officer for MACs, etc., 9 Apr. 1953, ISA FM 2438/6; Evans to Ross, 14 Apr. 1953, PRO FO 371-104779 ER1091/89. Troops of the IDF's 7th Brigade planted a series of mines on roads around Gaza on the night of 13/14 Apr. 1953. The mining was so inept, according to Dayan, that the Arabs discovered all the mines, and UN observers at first could not believe that it was an IDF operation (Dayan, *Avnei*, 112; Milstein, *HaTzanhanim* i. 136).

[89] Evans to Ross, 14 Apr. 1953, PRO FO 371-104779 ER1091/89.

[90] 'Notes on Border Incidents along the Israel Frontier', Embassy of Israel (London?), 22 Apr. 1953, ISA FM 2436/8. The US consulate in Jerusalem, which took an unusually close

(Footnote continued on next page)

The cluster of murderous incidents forced Israel's hand. Ben-Gurion and the generals decided on an innovative response.[91] At 6 p.m. on 22 April a company of IDF snipers, deployed on rooftop positions and in fortifications in West Jerusalem, unleashed a fusillade of shots across the armistice line, killing six Jordanians and wounding fourteen. Six Israelis were wounded by Jordanian counterfire. 'There was great panic in the Old City, and panic too in several of our [Jewish] areas', commented Ben-Gurion. Glubb later recalled: 'We were taken by surprise. We had always considered that Israel would not use violence in Jerusalem, for fear of reviving the demand for internationalization.'[92] American observers called the sniping spree the 'most grimly serious threat to peace between [Israel and Jordan] since armistice signed'.[93] Jordan's newly installed monarch, King Hussein, was deeply angered. His prime minister called in the British and American envoys and invoked the Tripartite Declaration and the Anglo-Jordanian defence treaty.[94]

The Western Powers declined to be drawn in and the border continued to sputter. On 5 May an old, blind Israeli, who had apparently strayed into the Jordanian sector of Jerusalem, was shot dead by Legionnaires. To the west of the capital, at Mishmar Ayalon, opposite the Latrun Salient, infiltrators broke into a house, shot dead a farmer, and wounded his wife. An army vehicle was fired on near Tel Mond and the driver injured.[95]

Shefifon `Alei Derekh

The Jordanians, and British and American diplomats in Jordan and Jerusalem, sometimes said, and perhaps believed, that some of these crimes were, in fact, committed by Israelis. An Arab Legion report from 25 May 1953 specifically cited the 30 March 1953 murder of a middle-aged couple in Tzipori, in the Galilee, which Israel initially attributed to infiltrators but for which an Israeli Arab was eventually arrested.[96] In

(Footnote continued from previous page)

interest in the Kiryat Moshe incident as the victims were Americans, concluded that the murders could have been the work of infiltrators or of Jewish criminals (Tyler to SecState, 24 Apr. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2).

[91] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 21 April 1953, BGA.

[92] W. Riley (Jerusalem) to A. Cordier (New York), 23 Apr. 1953, UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0-1; Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 22 Apr. 1953, BGA; Glubb, *Soldier*, 304. Glubb writes that ten Jordanians were killed and twelve wounded. De Ridder apparently believed that the sniping offensive in Jerusalem was a 'deliberate attempt by Israel to provoke Jordan to some counter stroke which would justify Israel in declaring war . . . [in order] to capture [Arab East] Jerusalem and drive down to Jericho' (Glubb to Melville (Arab Legion Liaison Office, London), 12 June 1953, PRO FO 371-104784).

[93] Tyler to SecState, 24 Apr. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[94] Green to SecState, 23 Apr. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[95] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 5 May 1953, BGA.

[96] 'How Serious is the Infiltration Problem in Fact?' Arab Legion HQ, 25 May 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

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June, an American diplomat reported that the British ambassador in Amman believed a series of murderous attacks on Israeli settlements on 26 May—at Beit Nabala, Beit `Arif Aleph, and Beit `Arif Bet—to be the work of the 'Stern Gang' (the British name for the pre-state *LHI* Jewish terrorist group). Glubb, reported the US diplomat, was similarly convinced that the operations were characterized by a military efficiency that ruled out infiltrators. Since the raids had not been carried out by the Legion, Glubb reasoned, they must have been the work of an organized Israeli group.[97]

But the Israelis had no doubt about the perpetrators of the May 1953 attacks. Makleff, the IDF CGS, requested permission for a multi-pronged retaliation—against a series of West Bank border villages and their National Guard contingents, and against Jordanian traffic. Ben-Gurion agreed.[98] The raids, called *Shefifon `Alei Derekh* (Operation Viper on the Track), were carried out on successive nights, starting 17/18 May.

In all, seven West Bank villages were attacked by squad- or platoon-sized detachments—Beit Sira (17/18 May), Husan (18/19 May), Khirbet al Jarushiya (20/1 May), Shuweika (20/1 May), Beit Nuba (20/1 May), Al Midya (20/1 May), and Beit Liqya (20/1 May)—and a bus was ambushed near Beit Sira (17/18 May). Two Arab civilians were killed (a man in Beit Sira and a woman in Beit Liqya) and about a dozen wounded (including a 4-year-old child). Three houses were blown up—one in Beit Liqya, one in Khirbet al Jarushiya, and one in Shuweika. At Al Midya, the IDF paratroops killed nine sheep and a donkey. In the five main raids—on Beit Sira, Husan, Beit Nuba, Al Midya, and Beit Liqya—the paratroops were in effect driven off by hastily mobilized National Guardsmen.[99]

The amateurism—and brutality—of the raiders reached a peak on the night of 23/4 May, when an IDF Southern Command unit raided an encampment of the Al Talalka bedouin tribe, on the Israeli side of the Israel-Jordan border, south of Hebron. The raiders, who apparently believed they were attacking an encampment inside Jordan, fired on the bedouin's tents, killing two women and a 70-year-old man, and wounding two children. They then killed some twenty sheep and three camels, before driving off in a waiting vehicle.[100]

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[97] Green to SecState, 4 June 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[98] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 8 May 1953, BGA.

[99] Wallach and Lissak (eds.), *Atlas*, 97 (which omits mention of some of these raids); Dayan (*Avnei*, 112) briefly describes the Midya and Husan raids; and Arab Legion HQ to Colonel Melville, Arab Legion Liaison Office, London, 21 May 1953, PRO FO 371-104765. Several additional raids in the West Bank were apparently carried out or attempted by IDF units between 17 and 21 May but without result.

[100] E. Be'eri to MKs Y. Ben-Aharon and Y. Riftin, 4 June 1953, HHA kaf-90-4/5. According to Be'eri, a Middle East scholar from Kibbutz Hazore`a, the Beersheba area military governor initially blamed the raid on the Jordanians. Afterwards, 'he admitted it was an Israeli unit' and promised the bedouins compensation.

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The raids caused a flurry of diplomatic activity. Jordan sent a 'note' to the signatories of the Tripartite Declaration asking them to curb Israel.[101] In response, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill shot off a plaintive message to Ben-Gurion, who, reportedly, was 'moved' but 'asked what advice could [Britain] give beyond exhortations to patience'. He had not, he assured the British ambassador, 'previously heard of the incidents'. The IDF also 'claimed to have no knowledge [of the raids]'. The Israel Foreign Ministry maintained that it 'had no information beyond what had appeared in the local press' (which, in the ministry's case, may well have been true).[102]

The Foreign Office also called in the Israel ambassador, Eliahu Elath. Selwyn Lloyd, the minister of state, told him that Jordan was doing all it could to curb infiltration, and that the reprisals were harming Anglo-Jordanian relations. It was in Israel's interest to have British troops in Jordan and to have an Arab Legion commanded by Britons, he said. Lloyd felt that the ambassador understood that Israel's was 'a weak case'.[103] Israeli Foreign Ministry officials, at least in internal correspondence, concurred:

> According to all the information we possess . . . the Jordanians are sincerely interested in curbing infiltration . . . and they are trying to bring it to an end. Without any doubt, the infiltration is not organized, directed and encouraged by the responsible Jordanian authorities,

wrote Ya'ir Elgom.[104]

Nevertheless, Israeli leaders, in conversations with Western diplomats, charged that it was the

> result of deliberate Jordan policy [to] encourage, through inactivity, harassment of Israel by infiltrators . . . Opinion advanced by some [Israelis] that Jordan behaviour is part of coordinated Arab strategy to weaken and eventually destroy Israel and that through infiltration Arabs have found means of in effect engaging in warfare without risking full consequences . . .[105]

Responding to Churchill's message, Ben-Gurion argued that marauding across the Jordanian frontier, 'chronic for years, has lately become much worse'—with over 1,000 Arabs crossing the lines each month 'with criminal intent . . . cattle is stolen, orchards are uprooted . . . roads mined, traffic

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[101] 'Note', Jordanian Foreign Ministry, 23 May 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

[102] Evans to FO, 24 May 1953, PRO FO 371-104765 ER1091/183; Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 4 June 1953, BGA.

[103] Memo. on conversation with Israel ambassador, S. Lloyd, 27 May 1953, PRO FO 371-104765 ER1091/185(A); FO to Evans, 29 May 1953, PRO FO 371-104765.

[104] Y. Elgom to M. Gazit, first secretary, Israel Embassy, London, 25 May 1953, ISA FM 2592/18.

[105] F. H. Russell (Tel Aviv) to SecState, 26 May 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2.

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fired on and harmless people murdered in their homes'. It was 'not surprising' that 'men' felt impelled to retaliate, 'thinking this to be the only effective deterrent'.[106]

The British, partly persuaded by Israel's denial of knowledge or responsibility, began to believe that the May raids were an initiative of local Israeli commanders, backed, albeit, by an *a priori carte blanche* from the political authorities.[107]

The attacks and counter-strikes continued through the summer. On 31 May Israeli freight and passenger trains were fired at on the Rosh Ha`Ayin-Haifa track. That same day three infiltrators from Lebanon ambushed an Israeli truck at Meiron, killing a 16-year-old and wounding three others.[108] Between 8 June and 18 July 1953 nine Israelis were killed, three wounded, and four vehicles ambushed by infiltrators along the Jordanian border. (There were also sixty-six cases of theft or attempted theft and infiltration accompanied by exchanges of fire.)[109] Among the more serious incidents were a grenade attack on 9 June on settlers at Tirat Yehuda, in the centre of the country, in which one person was killed and two houses were badly damaged;[110] an attack on 10 June on Mishmar Ayalon, near the Latrun Salient, in which a woman was wounded; a grenade attack on the night of 15/16 June on a Jewish house in Rosh Pina, in eastern Galilee (by infiltrators from Lebanon or Syria);[111] an attack on 2 July 1953 by four infiltrating National Guardsmen near the Israeli Arab village of At Taiyiba, in the Little Triangle, in which an Israeli Arab was wounded; an attack on settlement guards at Kibbutz Netiv HaLamed-Heh, in the Jerusalem Corridor, on 7 July; the murder by infiltrating refugees

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[106] Evans to FO, 30 May 1953, PRO FO 371-104783 ER1091/205.

[107] Evans to FO, 30 May 1953, PRO FO 371-104783 ER1091/195. The British minister in Amman wrote in June that
during the last two months or so the Israel Government has virtually given a free hand to their military leaders, who in turn have delegated responsibility to local commanders to take such military action as they like within fairly wide limits . . . The advantage of this procedure was that both the Israel Higher Command and the Israel Government could with perfect truth deny knowledge of attacks. (Furlonge to Ross, 6 June 1953, PRO FO 371-104784 ER1091/235)
Of course, this was sheer nonsense. The raids were all authorized or approved at Cabinet level (Ben-Gurion) and planned and directed by the IDF CGS and/or the IDF General Staff and the Operations Department, and carried out by units operating under Northern, Central, or Southern Command.

[108] Russell to SecState, 3 June 1953, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 2.

[109] 'Tentative Summary of Infiltration on the Jordan Border (From 8.6.53 to 18.7.53)', unsigned (but probably by IDF Intelligence Branch), and undated, ISA FM 2402/12.

[110] Maj. S. Nutov to Lt.-Col. H. Gaon, 14 June 1953, ISA FM 2949/18. Glubb believed that the attack may have been due to 'internal Jewish feuds' (between Sephardim and Ashkenazim) (Glubb to Melville (Arab Legion Liaison Office, London), 12 June 1953, PRO FO 371-104784).

[111] Israel delegation to Israel-Lebanon-Syria MAC to IDF General Staff Officer for MACs, etc., ? June 1953, ISA FM 2433/2.

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from Suba of two Israeli sentries at an outpost near Khirbet al Lauz, in the Judaean Hills, on 10 July; the murder by infiltrators of an Israeli watchman in the Bayit VeGan neighbourhood of Jerusalem on 17 July; the attack on 17 July on Israeli troops by Arab Legionnaires and National Guardsmen at Muntar al Juz, in the Hebron foothills, in which one Israeli died and two were wounded; and the ambush, the same day, of an Israeli jeep in the Jezreel Valley.[112]

The attacks were taking a toll on the morale of Israeli border settlers, and, after a murder on 19 June 1953 in Moshav Beit Neqofa, in the Jerusalem Corridor, Ben-Gurion noted:

> There are 42 couples [in the settlement][;] 12 men do guard duty [each night], each guards three times a week . . . Several [settlers] left after the incident. Others want to leave. They complain of lack of arms. Two Sten guns failed to work [during the incident]. [They] demand: More weapons, army [protection].[113]

The IDF struck back on 11 July with a small raid on Wadi Fukin, just south of the Jerusalem Corridor, in which one Arab died, and another small (and unsuccessful) raid the following night on An Nabi Samwil, north-west of Jerusalem. No Arabs were hurt in the second raid.[114] Further pinprick raids, called *Mivtza Shefifon Hadash* (Operation New Viper), were launched on the night of 19/20 July against the West Bank villages of Nahhalin, Shuweika, and Al Jab`a.[115]

Nakam Veshilem

The IDF struck again, in concentrated fashion, against a series of villages south and south-west of the Jerusalem Corridor, on the night of 11/12 August, in *Nakam VeShilem* (Operation Vengeance and Reprisal). Units of the Jerusalem (16th) Brigade failed to find their objective in Al Khadr. Units of the Giv`ati Brigade attacked the villages of Surif, Wadi Fukin, and Beit Aula, blowing up a number of houses and killing six villagers.[116] A unit of the armoured 7th Brigade, sent to blow up a number of houses at Al Dawayima, an abandoned village inside Israeli territory, failed to locate the site and returned to base without completing its mission. At Idna, which Dayan had clearly targeted as an infiltrators' centre during a

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[112] 'Tentative Summary of Infiltration on Jordan Border (from 8.6.53 to 18.7.53)', ISA FM 2402/12; untitled Arab Legion report from 13 July 1953, PRO FO 371-104786 ER1091/288.

[113] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 21 June 1953, BGA.

[114] Untitled Arab Legion report, 13 July 1953, PRO FO 371-104748 ER1091/288.

[115] Wallach and Lissak (eds.), *Atlas*, 97.

[116] Transcript of Uri Milstein interview on 1 Aug. 1983 with Maj. Jacky Conforti, for a recollection of the botched raid on Wadi Fukin, which was typical of the series.

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meeting with Jordanian officials a few weeks before,[117] a unit of the paratroop battalion blew up a small bridge but lost one of its men (leaving the body behind). Another paratroop unit fired ineffectually on the village of Tarqumiya and failed to stop Legion reinforcements from reaching Idna. A unit of the 79th Battalion went astray and failed to hit Khirbet Beit 'Awwa, a small village in the Hebron foothills.[118]

Glubb later maintained that Jordan 'could not understand the reason for these attacks, as we were straining every nerve to reduce infiltration'. July, August, and September 1953 had witnessed a major reduction in infiltration (compared with April, May, and June), Glubb maintained.[119] The raids drew sharp British and American protest, with Washington professing to be 'deeply disturbed' at this resumption of reprisals.[120]

But Israeli leaders, especially in the military, were more perturbed by the army's poor performance. As Ariel Sharon later summed up the series of botched operations during the first eight months of 1953:

> army units proved unable to locate their targets at night and wandered around aimlessly in the dark. Or if they did manage to find their objectives, they would exchange a few shots with Arab guards, then withdraw. At best they managed to occupy a few outlying buildings and blow them up before leaving . . . [121]

Parallel to the retaliatory strategy, Israel repeatedly tried to arrange meetings with senior Jordanian officials and to persuade Amman to increase its efforts to curb infiltration. British and Jordanian officials indeed believed, with some justification, that a few of the retaliatory strikes were intended to persuade Jordan to agree to such meetings, for Jordan was always reluctant, and usually acceded only after a major and painful IDF strike. Even then, all the meetings really produced were Jordanian assurances of greater effort, met invariably by Israeli scepticism.[122]

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[117] Lt.-Col. A. Shalev to head of IDF Intelligence Branch, etc., 30 June 1953, ISA FM 2429/5.

[118] Dayan, *Avnei*, 112. Some of these raids—on Surif, Wadi Fukin, and Idna—are described in Tyler to SecState, 12 Aug. 1953, and A. G. Lynch (Amman) to SecState, 12 Aug. 1953, both in NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2. Wallach and Lissak (eds.) (*Atlas*, 97) misdate the raids to night of 12/13 Aug. 1953.

[119] Glubb, *Soldier*, 308.

[120] 'Aide Memoire', British Embassy, Tel Aviv, 27 Aug. 1953, and 'Aide Memoire', US Embassy, Tel Aviv, 24 Aug. 1953, both in ISA FM 2432/3.

[121] Sharon, *Warrior*, 80.

[122] Shalev to IDF Intelligence Branch, etc., 30 June 1953, ISA FM 2429/5, describes one such meeting, between Dayan (and Shalev) and Jordan's Brigadier General `Einab on 29 June 1953.

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8
Qibya

Ben-Gurion and Sharett: the Emergence in Jerusalem of Two Schools of Thought

In the course of the early 1950s, as strife along the borders continued, two schools of thought emerged in Jerusalem about the proper response to Arab depredations. While the focus of debate between the two was usually the retaliatory policy in general and individual reprisal operations in particular, in more general terms the argument was over the way Israel should deal with the surrounding Arab world. Inevitably, there was also disagreement over relations with the West and the United Nations. Through the mid-1950s, the 'Activists' (or *Bit'honistim* (the security-minded ones)), led by Ben-Gurion (prime minister and defence minister from 1948 until the end of 1953, defence minister from February 1955 until 1963, and prime minister from November 1955 until 1963), Pinhas Lavon (defence minister from December 1953 until February 1955) and Dayan (IDF CGS from December 1953 until 1958), and the 'Moderates', led by Sharett (foreign minister from 1948 until June 1956 and prime minister from December 1953 until November 1955), vied for dominance over Israeli foreign and defence policy. Put starkly (and somewhat simplistically), it was a struggle between hardliners and softliners, security-centredness and diplomacy, intractability and conciliation, the certainty of war and a chance for peace. For most of the period, the Activists enjoyed the upper hand. The struggle ended in 1956 with their victory, as Sharett was ousted from the Cabinet and the IDF prepared the Sinai Campaign.

In late 1957, a year after his forced retirement from office, Sharett defined the two schools:

> One [i.e. the Activist] approach believes, that the Arabs understand only the language of force . . . . The State of Israel, from time to time, must prove dearly that it is strong, and able and willing to use force, in a devastating and highly effective way. If it does not prove this, it will be swallowed up, and perhaps wiped off the face of the earth. As to peace—this approach states—it is in any case doubtful; in any case, very remote. If peace comes, it will come only if [the Arabs] are convinced that this country cannot be beaten . . . If [retaliatory] operations . . . re-kindle the fires of hatred, that is no cause for fear for the fires will be fuelled in any event . . . .
>
> The other approach [states that] not even for one moment must the matter of peace vanish from our calculations. This is not only a political calculation; in the

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> long run, this is a decisive security consideration [as well]. . . . We must restrain our responses [to Arab attacks]. And there is always the question: is it really proven that retaliatory actions solve the security problem . . .

In a sense, Sharett was saying that (Activist) Israeli policy lacked a dimension of empathy: the Israeli decision-makers failed to understand or try to understand how the Arabs saw things.

> We were so suffused with the recognition of the historic justice of our cause, that we failed to notice the relativity of this justice from the perspective of the other side. And we further failed in understanding the psychological [dimension] of the problem, [and] we did not take sufficient account of the depth of national consciousness and feeling in the Arab world.[1]

The Activists were not particularly interested in Arab feelings. They believed, as Dayan said in January 1956, that 'the conflict was about the very existence of the State of Israel', not about this or that piece of land or claim. 'The Arabs question Israel's very existence. When we are advised to compromise with them, it is [like] a man whose friend wants to kill him and [others] advise him—okay, reach a compromise, in the meantime he will not kill you, he will only lop off your hand.' The efficacy of retaliatory strikes should not really be weighed against their possible effect on Arab-Israeli peace-making efforts or prospects, for such 'prospects' were illusory. Similarly, political-diplomatic calculations about the proper timing of such operations must yield to operational needs and exigencies.[2]

As applied to the infiltration problem, a British observer defined the two schools of thought thus:

> The argument of the first school, to which on the whole the Army, the Police, and the inhabitants of the border settlements subscribe, runs as follows[.] The only effective method of reducing infiltration is to give the local Jordanian authorities . . . an interest in keeping their own sectors quiet . . . There is no hope of results from diplomatic pressure on the Jordan Government through the Western Powers, and the only solution is direct action by Israeli forces of the kind traditionally adopted by countries with anarchic territories across their borders, e.g. the policy of the ancient Romans towards the German tribes, and of the British on the North-West Frontier of India in the nineteenth century. There is no real danger to Israel in a policy of reprisals because however much the Western Powers may make representations and threats, they will never in fact use troops against Israel, and the Jordanians will rapidly respond to the only argument they understand.
>
> The other and more moderate school of thought argues that such ideas are out of date in these days of international organisations and a conscious world public

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[1] M. Sharett, 'Yisrael Ve`Arav—Milhama VeShalom', *Ot*, Sept. 1966, excerpt from speech delivered in Beit Berl, Oct.-Nov. 1957.

[2] 'The CGS's Lecture—Data for the Situation Assessment for 1956', Gen. Dayan, 15 Jan. 1956.

opinion, and can certainly not form the basis of policy for a country so dependent on international goodwill and foreign financial support, as Israel. It is more aware of the causes within Jordan of infiltration, and points out that Israel must take pains to appear before world opinion as the patently injured party, and must rely on diplomatic action to bring about a change of heart and practice in Jordan.[3]

The Activist school, in a rider to its 'force-only' philosophy, held that Israel must and, eventually, would 'adjust' and 'rationalize' its unnatural, serpentine eastern frontier and replace it with a straight line, preferably along the River Jordan. This stemmed naturally from the belief that, since the Arab world was implacably hostile and understood only the language of force, a Second Round was inevitable, and it would be better fought along defensible, natural frontiers, which afforded the country a modicum of strategic depth. 'Natural' frontiers would also help substantially in the struggle against the infiltration.

Through the early 1950s Dayan, as IDF chief of operations and then as chief of staff, spoke of the inevitability of a Second Round; of the need for a pre-emptive strike; and of a necessary re-drawing of the frontiers.[4] Other senior staff officers occasionally echoed Dayan's expansionist philosophy.[5]

Periodically during the early and mid-1950s, the defence establishment Activists pressed the government to exploit this or that circumstance to conquer Arab territory, and not just along the Jordanian frontier. On 11 August 1953 Ben-Gurion—then on leave in Sdeh Boqer—proposed 'the conquest of the Hebron area. Egypt is now preoccupied [with the British and Suez Canal] and will not interfere . . . And we will not return the area [to Jordan] until we receive sure guarantees to curb infiltration.'[6] On 27 February 1954—and now in temporary retirement—he recorded, against the backdrop of severe political tumult in Syria and Egypt, that Lavon and Dayan had come to consult. 'Lavon proposed entering the demilitarized zones [on the Israeli-Syrian frontier], seizing the high ground across the Syrian border [that is part or all of the Golan Heights], and entering the Gaza Strip or seizing an Egyptian position near Eilat.' Ben-Gurion opposed attacking Egypt or crossing the Syrian border, but agreed to a push into the DMZ 'with an announcement that the anarchy in Syria compels us to protect our settlements'. Sharett vetoed all the proposals.[7]

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[3] A. R. Moore (British Embassy, Tel Aviv) to A. D. M. Ross, Eastern Dept., FO, 16 June 1953, PRO FO 371-104784.

[4] See, e.g., 'Meeting of the Ministers of Israel', Dayan's lecture, 7-23 July 1950, ISA FM 2463/2; S. R. Tyler jun. (Jerusalem) to SecState, 29 Sept. 1952, NA RG 59, State Dept. Records, LM 59, Palestine and Israel, International Affairs, Roll 1.

[5] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 80-1, entry for 26 Oct. 1953.

[6] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 11 Aug. 1953, BGA.

[7] Ibid. entry for 27 Feb. 1954, BGA.

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A month earlier Dayan had proposed conquering Egyptian territory at Ras el Naqb, near Eilat, or cutting through Sinai, south of Rafah, to the Mediterranean. He acknowledged that such steps would mean 'war'. Again, there was a Sharett veto.[8] In May 1955 Dayan proposed that Israel annex Lebanese territory south of the Litani River (at the same time forging an alliance with a Maronite commander, who would crush the Muslims).[9]

On one level, the Activist-Moderate split—which was largely to focus on Ben-Gurion and Sharett—was very much a matter of character and personal philosophy: Ben-Gurion's Judaeo-centric, Israelo-centric world view, which Sharett frequently criticized as self-centred and incorrigibly inward-looking,[10] versus Sharett's more open, cosmopolitan perspective. Sharett was acutely attuned to Western thinking and, on occasion, was also able to put himself in the Arabs' shoes. In a candid moment, in conversation with an American diplomat in 1951, Eban noted: Ben-Gurion 'hardly knows there is an Arab world—Sharett does know.'[11]

Underlying the Activist-Moderate split, there was also a bedrock of personal animus and accounting. Sharett never got on with Dayan and Lavon. But the crucial relationship was with Ben-Gurion. Ben-Gurion and Sharett had shared a political vision and worked together since the First World War. Since the 1930s, Ben-Gurion had steered the Zionist enterprise, with Sharett in charge of the movement's foreign relations. This division of labour had continued after the establishment of the state. Sharett admired and respected Ben-Gurion—but also felt overawed, overshadowed, and occasionally, jealous. Ben-Gurion, for his part, while respecting Sharett's analytical and diplomatic skills, and his mastery of languages, was envious of Sharett's man-of-the-world sociability and *savoir-faire*. People liked and respected Sharett; they 'merely' admired Ben-Gurion and stood in awe of him.

Occasionally, Sharett had opposed Ben-Gurion on major issues. Ben-Gurion tended to identify opposition with disloyalty. In September 1948 Sharett had blocked Ben-Gurion's proposal to conquer East Jerusalem and all or parts of the West Bank. In the mid-1950s Sharett repeatedly blocked motions by Ben-Gurion to launch large-scale strikes or a war against Egypt. When, in 1953, a tired Ben-Gurion temporarily retired, he had not proposed Sharett as his successor (though he had not opposed his succession). Ben-Gurion was to say in 1956, after firing Sharett from the

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[8] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 331-2, entry for 31 Jan. 1954. Bar-On (*Sha`arei `Aza*, 433 n. 62) mistakenly writes that Dayan had proposed the conquest of Sharm ash Sheikh at this meeting.

[9] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 996, 1024, entries for 16 and 28 May 1955.

[10] Tyler, US consul in Jerusalem, termed the Activist policy 'cocky, self-assertive indifference to the world' (Tyler to State Dept., 8 Jan. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3).

[11] 'Memorandum of Conversation' (Eban, G. Lewis), 18 July 1951, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 1.

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Foreign Ministry, that 'I did not think [in 1953, and, indeed, later] that he was capable [of filling] a leading and decisive role [i.e. the premiership]—as he does not have the daring, perspicacity, and real understanding of complex political situations.' Sharett, wrote Ben-Gurion, would make a fine foreign minister for a country like Denmark.[12]

In the early and mid-1950s Ben-Gurion's outlook was more attuned than Sharett's to Israeli public feeling, Sharett's corresponding more closely to that of the intelligentsia and the Western-oriented intellectuals who ran the Foreign Ministry. But, reluctant to wash dirty linen in public, Sharett and his aides often sounded like their Activist opponents. Except in 1954, the Activist approach dominated Israeli policies and pronouncements. American diplomats frequently characterized Israeli statements and press reports on border incidents (many of them issued by the Foreign Ministry) as 'irritatingly self-righteous, egocentric, overbearing and patronizing . . . toward the Arabs'. They spoke of 'the complete inability of Israel to see any point of view other than its own'.[13]

The Activist-Moderate rift emerged well before the start of Sharett's premiership. Its first signs were already apparent in the months in which Israel and its neighbours negotiated the 1949 armistice agreements.

In 1948 Sharett had been far from a dissenting moderate in Ben-Gurion's Cabinet. Indeed, throughout that revolutionary year he was the patron of Yosef Weitz's 'Transfer Committees'—which promoted a transfer solution to the potential problem of the large Arab minority in the incipient Jewish state.[14] Sharett's comments about the intimidation into flight of the Faluja and Iraq al Manshiya Arabs in late February-early March 1949 and of the possible similar treatment of the 'Little Triangle' villagers are hardly those of a softliner.[15] Sharett was as inflexible as Ben-Gurion in opposing Arab and Western demands for territorial concessions.

But by 1949-50 Sharett had already proved more attuned than most of his Cabinet colleagues to the thrust of Western policy and opinion. His criticism of IDF behaviour could be trenchant.[16] He repeatedly criticized search and expulsion operations against resettling infiltrators.[17] Gradually, his thinking and concerns diverged from those of the Ben-Gurion-dominated defence establishment. He understood the defence forces' need for firm measures against infiltration. But he repeatedly insisted that there were

[12] Ben-Gurion to leading members of Mapai, 28 June 1956, BGA. This letter did not explain why Ben-Gurion had kept Sharett at his side as his principal aide and had entrusted him with responsibility for the Zionist movement's and Israel's complex foreign relations for more than twenty years or why he had not opposed Sharett's assumption of the premiership.

[13] Tyler to State Dept., 16 Jan. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[14] Morris, *1948 and After*, essay 4 *passim*.

[15] Morris, *Birth*, 248-9.

[16] Ibid. 244.

[17] Foreign minister to defence minister, 21 and 29 June 1949; Sharett to Shiloah, 14 July 1950, all in ISA FM 2402/12.

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limits and that the IDF, on occasion, needlessly exceeded them. So it had been in the wake of the `Arava Expulsion of May 1950.[18]

Until autumn 1953 Israel's Cabinet ministers generally kept their internal disputes well camouflaged.[19] Tight military censorship of the media (and self-censorship) facilitated this. But occasionally echoes of dissidence in the Israeli Cabinet would reach Western ears.[20] In January 1952 Touqan, the chief Jordanian delegate to the IJMAC, spoke of 'the divergence of policy which he believes to exist between the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Army. . . . He believed that the Israeli Foreign Minister wished to follow a relatively moderate policy. . . . He added that the Army policy appeared to be in the ascendant.'[21] In July, Glubb explained the ups and downs in Israeli border policy:

> It has been suggested that the frequent reversals in their attitude are due to differences between the Jewish Foreign Office and the Israeli Army. When they agree to cooperate [with Jordan], it means that the Foreign Office [i.e. Ministry] have won a chukka. When the agreement is denounced and the shooting recommences, the Israeli Army has regained the upper hand.[22]

In June 1952, while refraining from criticism of his Cabinet colleagues, Sharett had informed the Americans of his views. 'He personally had always counselled restraint.' he said, responding to an American official who charged that 'Israel's policy of retaliation [was] self-defeating'.[23] And in July, Sharett told US Ambassador Monnett B. Davis that 'he had long been on record as opposed to reprisals on both moral and policy gounds'. Unfortunately, Davis reported, Sharett 'found it difficult [to] restrain . . . elements in mil[itary] . . .'.[24] Later that month, he took the extraordinary step of furnishing Davis with 'proof' of his claim that he had long opposed reprisals: Jewish Agency political reports from 1937 and 1939, attesting to his opposition to Jewish retaliation following terrorist attacks during the Arab Rebellion.[25]

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[18] Protocol of meeting of Mapai Knesset Faction and Secretariat, 18 June 1950, LPA 11-1-3.

[19] e.g. Tyler to State Dept., 1 Apr. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2, citing 'Sharett's opinion that use of force was the best policy in dealing with Arabs'.

[20] See, e.g., M. B. Davis (Tel Aviv) to Secstate, 30 Apr. 1951, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 2, noting Sharett's 'great regret' over a recent reprisal—possibly Sharafat: '[UN Secretary-General Trygve] Lie had impression Sharett is faced with difficult problem in combating recognized influence General Yadin has with Primin [i.e. Ben-Gurion].'

[21] A. R. Walmsley (Jerusalem) to M. T. Walker, British Legation (Amman), 9 Jan. 1952, PRO FO 371-98490.

[22] 'A Note on the Situation in Jordan 1st July 1952', Glubb, PRO FO 371-98861.

[23] 'Memorandum of Conversation' (Sharett, Assistant Secretary of State Byroade, etc.), Washington DC, 20 June 1952, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 6. Sharett had added that 'he had spent two years of his life in an Arab village and he not only liked them but he knows them well'.

[24] Davis to SecState, 20 July 1952, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9, Israel-Transjordan, Box 6.

[25] Davis to State Dept., 31 July 1952, NA RG 8Y, 321.9 Israel-Transjordan, Box 6.

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Sharett's moderation was undoubtedly fuelled by his contacts with Western officials and diplomats; it was reinforced by input from his Foreign Ministry aides in Jerusalem and from Israel's representatives abroad. In March 1953, for example, Eban cabled from Washington: 'We must . . . pay attention . . . to the possible results [in Washington] of our activities on the borders . . .'[26]

But, while often dissentient, Sharett, in these pre-Qibya days, was occasionally to be found 'explaining', if not actually defending, the Activist line. So it was at the Foreign Ministry senior staff meeting on 2 February 1953. 'The policy might be mistaken', he said, but it was the 'permanent policy—each time the depredations reach a crest, there must be a response . . .'. He then explained that the reprisals persuaded villagers to curb infiltration; prompted the Arab governments to curtail it; and reinforced border settlers' and IDF morale. Without the retaliatory policy there 'would be anarchy and . . . flight from the border areas . . .'.[27]

On balance, Sharett rejected the Activist posture. But he understood it and empathized with it sufficiently to explain it persuasively to his subordinates, even if he increasingly took a critical tack, partly in order to try to restrain the Activists, in Cabinet meetings.

The debate between the Activists and Moderates heated up in the course of 1953 with the increase in frequency and size of the retaliatory strikes. It assumed a more practical, sharper aspect when, in July 1953, Ben-Gurion went on an extended leave, which was to continue, with intermissions, until his resignation from the premiership (and Defence Ministry) in December. Sharett, the acting prime minister, clashed frequently with Lavon, the acting defence minister, and occasionally, also with Dayan, who became the CGS in December. In the background, always, hovered the minatory figure of Ben-Gurion.

A glimpse of the ongoing debate is afforded in Ben-Gurion's diary. Describing a meeting with Sharett just before *Mivtza Nakam VeShilem* (Operation Vengeance and Reprisal) (see Chapter 7) Ben-Gurion wrote: 'Contrary to Moshe [Sharett]'s opinion . . . reprisals are imperative. There is no relying for our security on UN observers and foreign states. If we do not put an end to these murders now—the situation will get worse.'[28] The Qibya raid of October 1953 and its extremely negative political fall-out prompted Sharett to demand a revision of the Israeli decision-making process on reprisals.[29] Ben-Gurion, to Sharett's mind, had displayed 'insensitivity' (*atimut*) and had tried to deceive his Cabinet colleagues

[26] Eban (Washington) to director general, 16 Mar. 1953, ISA FM 2432/3.

[27] 'Protocol of a Meeting that took place in the Office of the Foreign Minister on 2 Feb. 1953', ISA FM 4373/15.

[28] Ben-Gurion Diary, entries for 11 and 18 Aug. 1953, BGA.

[29] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 39, entry for 15 Oct. 1953.

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about his role in the decision to attack. At the same time, he had persuaded the Cabinet to hide Israel's responsibility for the raid and to attribute it to unnamed vigilante border settlers. Lavon defended the raid, backed by ministers Golda Meir and Dov Yosef. Sharett responded, focusing on general principles:

> I warned about the acute contradiction between our complete, objective dependence on the aid and support of the world and our subjective, psychological/ spiritual divorce from the world—our self-centredness and our complete insensitivity towards world public opinion's reactions to our actions. I berated the narrowness of perspective to which we have fallen prey. . . I brought as an example Ben-Gurion's mood that morning.

Such open, frontal criticism of Ben-Gurion by Sharett (or any minister) at a Cabinet meeting was rare. Sharett quickly discovered that he was isolated. His Mapai colleagues either supported Ben-Gurion and Lavon or held their peace.[30] The foreign minister's difficulties were compounded when Dayan, in New York, said that Sharett had not objected to Qibya, and that the cycle of infiltration and IDF raid was 'bound to lead to a war, which was ineluctable'.[31]

Before retiring, Ben-Gurion delivered one final, telling blow in the post-Qibya struggle: he pushed through the Cabinet Dayan's appointment as chief of the general staff. Dayan, then 38, took over in December. Already by October Sharett had registered his fears of 'developments . . . in the army' following Dayan's impending appointment.[32] But, as usual, in the showdown over Dayan (several Cabinet ministers questioned the appointment), Sharett backed down and supported Ben-Gurion. At the same time, he wrote ambiguously to Golda Meir: 'Moshe Dayan is not a military person and is not disciplined. He is a bold partisan fighter in war and a gifted statesman-adventurer in peace.'[33]

Sharett's relations with Dayan steadily deteriorated. Dayan felt Sharett's policy of (limited) restraint was wrong-headed. Sharett feared that Dayan's adventurousness, bordering on the reckless, would lead to an unnecessary war. By early 1955, with Ben-Gurion back in the Cabinet as defence minister, Dayan was openly 'waging propaganda' warfare against Sharett's line.[34] Sharett, for his part, believed that Dayan 'strives for war'.[35]

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[30] Ibid. i. 48-52, entry for 18 Oct. 1953.

[31] Ibid. i. 80, entry for 25 Oct. 1953; G. Rafael, *Destination Peace: Three Decades of Israeli Foreign Policy* (New York, 1981), 34.

[32] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 91, entry for 28 Oct. 1953.

[33] Ibid. i. 202, entry for 29 Nov. 1953.

[34] Ibid. iii. 705, entry for 6 Feb. 1955; iv. 1048, entry for 7 June 1955. At one public meeting Dayan reportedly decried Sharett's 'grovelling' before the Western Powers and called for 'rebellion' against the government's policy.

[35] Ibid. iv. 932, entry for 14 Apr. 1955.

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The Americans greeted Ben-Gurion's announcement in autumn 1953 of impending retirement with disguised pleasure. As Sharett was perceived as an agent of moderation, so Ben-Gurion was increasingly viewed as the patron of the 'dynamic, aggressive [Activist] policy'.[36] Washington and London were both happy to see Sharett emerge as Ben-Gurion's heir and hoped he would subordinate 'Defence to Foreign Affairs . . . and ensure that matters are discussed and not simply acted on emotionally and summarily'. But they were aware of Sharett's political vulnerability and understood what he was up against. However, they remained guardedly optimistic: 'The replacement of an aggressive personality [i.e. Ben-Gurion] by one used to diplomacy and compromise may modify Israel's often uncooperative demeanour.'[37]

Once in the saddle, Sharett surprised some Western observers by adopting what amounted to a pragmatic, middle-of-the-road course between Activism and dissent: acquiescing in certain reprisals, when public and military indignation reached boiling point, but rejecting a policy of automatic, massive retaliation. His heart may not have been in it, but, as prime minister, Sharett found that he had to make occasional concessions to the defence establishment, lest it get completely out of hand. As it was, the IDF frequently carried out minor actions without informing or consulting him.

To some extent, Sharett came to accept the Activists' argument that the retaliatory strikes at least temporarily reduced infiltration and cross-border terrorism in specific areas. In mid-1955, for example, he argued that Qibya and the raid on Nahhalin (April 1954) had 'curbed the murderous infiltration'.[38] On 12 April 1954 he told senior Foreign Ministry staff, who opposed the reprisals: 'This is a one-sided view which sees the situation more from an international perspective, not from a national [perspective].' The Activists were not 'blood-thirsty, hotheads', said Prime Minister Sharett. 'Just as there are decisive considerations militating against reprisals, so there are practical considerations for them.' What alternative was there? How else could Israel put an end to the thefts and infiltrations? Sharett asked.

And one 'could not ignore' the question of morale, in the case of both the army and the border settlers:

> If we take into account what is said in London, Washington and New York, we must first take into account what Yosef Mizrahi and Shlomo Alkabes, whom we send to such [border] sites, which must not be abandoned, are saying. For such Jews, it is a fact that night after night, [infiltrators] enter and steal and kill.

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[36] Ibid. i. 132, entry for 10 Nov. 1953.

[37] Evans to Eden, 8 Dec. 1953. PRO FO 371-111057.

[38] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1025, entry for 28 May 1955.

If there were no reprisals, the border settlers would feel that the government was 'indifferent' to their fate and they would abandon the settlements. 'There is a groundswell of opinion here that there is no resisting and a government cannot ignore it if it wants to control things.' Yet he cautioned:

> The reprisals should be reduced [in number] and curbed [in dimensions], [there should be] intermissions in the reprisals process . . . [but] one should assume that the reprisals encourage both the Arabs and the powers to find a general solution to the problem of the [troubled] borders. . . At the same time, it is clear to us that [we] lose more than we gain

when Israel strikes at targets that are not the home bases of infiltrators. In short, concluded Sharett, 'the matter is complex and necessitates striking a delicate balance, but one cannot just . . . generally . . . forbid reprisals'.[39]

A month before, Sharett had defined his policy as one of 'restraint . . . balanced between a threat of [use of] force and mobilizing international [i.e. diplomatic] help'.[40] Sharett tried to strike this 'balance' after his formal installation as premier in January 1954.

Unit 101

At the beginning of 1953, following the botched raids against Falama, Idna, and Rantis, the IDF Intelligence Department soberly pointed to

> the need to establish a special unit to deal with infiltration. Such a unit, about the size of a company, should receive special training, will be capable of carrying out operations in small squads, will know the border areas, and will be mobile. [It should be possible] to activate it immediately after every incident to carry out a retaliatory strike anywhere and in every way required. Such a unit could also serve as an excellent intelligence-gathering source.[41]

Thinking about the need for a new approach and new methods was not confined to the IDF. 'The political imbroglio following the recent Israeli retaliatory strikes across the armistice line necessitates a re-evaluation of the routine methods of response,' wrote the director of the Foreign Ministry's Research Department, Katriel Katz.[42] Katz's letter was a covering note for a memorandum entitled 'Ways of Fighting the Infiltration',

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[39] 'A Précis of the Statement of the Foreign Minister at a Consultation that Took Place in the Foreign Ministry on 12 April 1954', 30 Aug. (perhaps *recte* Apr.) 1954, ISA FM 2448/15.

[40] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 417, entry for 18 Mar. 1954.

[41] 'Infiltration in 1952 (a Summary for the Months Jan.-Nov).', unsigned (but by IDF Intelligence Dept.), undated (but from Dec. 1952 or early 1953), ISA FM 2428/4 aleph.

[42] K. Katz to director general, 12 Apr. 1953, ISA FM 2402/12.

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written on the basis of another memorandum (with the same title) by Research Department official Yael Vered and discussions of that memorandum among the department's executives.

Vered's memorandum, submitted to Katz a month earlier, had argued that

> using the IDF . . . against all types of [infiltration] has not always achieved its objective, because, while briefly curbing infiltration, it led to a hardening of the Arab position towards us, a wave of atrocity propaganda against us and protests by the Great Powers.

Vered made several proposals, some of them of great inventiveness. She suggested that a 'great deal of good' in curbing infiltration might stem from developing neighbourly relations between Israeli settlement headmen and Arab village headmen (*mukhtars*) and local National Guard and Legion officers just across the border. She further suggested that Israel try to exploit existing enmities between Arab clans. Similarly, she proposed that Israel agents in Arab countries send letters of 'complaint' to the Arab League's anti-Israel Boycott Office charging that infiltrator bands were violating the boycott by smuggling goods to and from Israel: the Boycott Office could then be expected to try to curb such infiltration.

On the conventional military side, Vered suggested that retaliatory strikes be used 'only in extreme cases'. The day-to-day battle against infiltration should be waged by 'bands of Israeli infiltrators . . . Jews and minorities [i.e. Israeli Arabs and Druse]' who should appear to be 'privately' organized and unconnected with the Israeli government 'so that there would be no place to accuse Israel of aggression'. These 'private bands', she proposed, should carry out burglaries and robberies, and dismantle irrigation systems and telephone lines on the Arab side of the border. Rich and influential Arabs should be targeted. Those thus hurt could then be expected to turn upon the infiltrators and pressure their governments to curb infiltration. 'It is not always necessary to take the extreme measure of blowing up houses and killing people indiscriminately', she wrote. Vered suggested that these bands be organized and run by the IDF Intelligence Department's special duties officers, overseen by an interdepartmental committee. In short, Vered proposed 'to break away from the hard framework of the retaliatory strikes and to direct them with greater flexibility and thought, and to adapt them in each area to the local conditions'.[43]

[43] 'Ways of Fighting Infiltration', Y. Vered to Katz, 12 Mar. 1953, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph. The Katz memorandum, of the same name, undated but following discussions in the Research Dept. on 26 Mar. 1953, differs only slightly from Vered's original. Katz asserted that Israel's reprisals had resulted in a substantial increase in the strength and efficiency of the Jordanian NG—thus facilitating the Legion's objective of turning the NG into an effective defensive force ('Ways of Fighting Infiltration (Summary of a Discussion that Took Place in the Research Department on 26 Mar. 1953)', unsigned and undated, ISA FM 2402/12).

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In the end, the IDF adopted a somewhat different course. In August 1953 it set up Unit 101. Initially, in an IDF General Staff meeting in May 1953, the head of operations, Dayan, had opposed the proposal to establish a special élite unit for retaliatory strikes, arguing that all the IDF's combat formations should be equal to the task.[44] But in July 1953, after the murder of two Israeli watchmen near Jerusalem, the commander of the Jerusalem Brigade, Colonel Misha'el Shaham, approached an old army comrade, Major (Res.) Ariel Sharon, who had left the army less than a year before. Could Sharon, with a few hand-picked friends, locate and kill Mustafa Samwili and his colleagues, who were responsible for some of the more vicious cross-border raids in the Jerusalem Corridor? The fact that Shaham had turned to civilians (albeit reserve soldiers) for succour was indicative of the IDF's state in mid-1953. It had no units capable of carrying out reprisals efficiently. In part, this was due, and dated back, to the disbandment, at Ben-Gurion's behest, of the IDF's three best combat units in the 1948 War, the Palmah brigades. At the same time, many of the best officers, feeling that the emergency had passed, had left the army for civilian life. Moreover, Israeli society—and, with it, the IDF—had undergone a process of 'impoverishment' since 1949, with more than 800,000 poor, often traumatized immigrants pouring into the country, many from Muslim North Africa and the Middle East, most illiterate and unskilled.

In November 1952 Sharon, then Northern Command's intelligence officer, under Dayan, had successfully abducted two Jordanian Legionnaires in the Beit Shean Valley to trade for IDF soldiers held hostage by the Jordanians.[45] Now, the IDF needed Sharon's wiles and resolve to destroy the Samwili gang, operating from the hilltop village of An Nabi Samwil. Sharon rounded up seven friends with guerrilla skills— Shlomo Baum, Yoram Lavi, Yehuda Piamente, Yehuda Dayan, Yosef Sa`adia, Yitzhak Ben-Menahem, and a man named 'Uzi'. The eight, armed with Tommy-guns, pistols, Molotov Cocktails, and grenades, struck on the night of 11/12 July 1953,[46] with the aim of destroying Samwili's house in the centre of the village. They got as far as the village's eastern perimeter, partially blowing up one house and throwing grenades into a second, both of them apparently empty. No one was hurt. But Shaham felt that, compared to past IDF performance, Sharon's raid had been a success.[47]

Sharon's post-operation report pointed to the need for a specially

[44] Teveth, *Dayan*, 388-9; Dayan, *Avnei*, 114.

[45] Sharon, *Warrior*, 73-6.

[46] Wallach and Lissak (eds.) (*Atlas*, 112), misdate the raid 12 Aug. 1953.

[47] Untitled Arab Legion report, 13 July 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2; Sharon, *Warrior*,

(Footnote continued on next page)

trained élite unit for reprisal operations.[48] The same message was subsequently passed to Ben-Gurion, who pressed CGS Makleff to approve the creation of 'Unit 101'. The General Staff approved, and Dayan (now converted to the idea) and Shaham pushed through Sharon's appointment as the unit's commander.[49] On 30 July, Unit 101 was commissioned, 'to carry out special reprisals across the state's borders'. The unit was initially to comprise fifty men and be issued with 'non-standard' weapons.[50]

Drawing on active service and reserve soldiers, Sharon began assembling his recruits. He took aboard several of the Nabi Samwil seven, including Baum, who became his deputy, and added a number of kibbutz and *moshav* youngsters who, in turn, brought in their friends. Many were from Jezreel Valley settlements. By early September Sharon had twenty fighters; by October, forty-five. Among the first recruits was Meir Har-Zion, a farmer's son from Moshav Rishpon, in the Coastal Plain, and, later, Kibbutz `Ein Harod, in the Jezreel Valley. The quintessential scout and raider, he was later described by Dayan as 'the finest of our commando soldiers' and 'the best soldier ever to emerge in the IDF'.[51]

Har-Zion had spent his youth hiking around the country, with frequent forays across the border. He thrived on danger. In 1951, trekking with his sister Shoshana along the Israel-Syria border, Har-Zion, then 15, was taken captive by Arab shepherds and jailed for three weeks in Damascus. During his first year in the army, before transferring to Unit 101, Har-Zion found time to trek to Petra, forty kilometres inside Jordan, and to hike from Jerusalem through the West Bank to the Dead Sea.[52] Har-Zion quickly became Sharon's chief (if unofficial) adviser on operations and came to symbolize the audacity, physical fitness and brutality of Unit 101.[53]

One Israeli commentator later summed up Har-Zion as personifying

> an Israeli version of the Indian Fighters in the American Wild West. Laconically killing Arab soldiers, peasants and townspeople in a kind of fury without hatred,

(Footnote continued from previous page)

78-82; Milstein, *HaTzanhanim*, i. 210-13; transcript of Uri Milstein interview with Misha'el Shaham, 16 Oct. 1977. Sharon, in his memoirs, falsely implies that the raiders reached and attacked Samwili's house.

[48] Sharon, *Warrior*, 81.

[49] Milstein, *HaTzanhanim*, i. 213-4; Sharon, *Warrior*, 83.

[50] Milstein, *HaTzanhanim*, i. 214.

[51] Dayan, *Avnei*, 114.

[52] Har-Zion, *Pirkei Yoman*, 143-53. The trip to Petra—to see the remains of the Nabatean capital hewn into the red sandstone cliffs in Idumea, north of `Aqaba—became something of an élite rite of passage for adventurous young Israelis in the early 1950s. The attraction of the hike across the border lay not only in its illegality and in the danger and hardship of trekking for two or three nights through hostile, barren countryside, but also in breaking out, as it were, of Israel's isolation. About a dozen Israeli teenagers were killed in the 1950s on trips to Petra, either by Arab Legion ambushes or by local bedouin. For decades, the Israeli government banned from the airwaves a song, 'HaSela HaAdom' (the Red Rock), which praised a band of youngsters killed on one such trek.

[53] Sharon, *Warrior*, 84; Gur, *Peluga Dalet*, 18.

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he remained cold-blooded and thoroughly efficient, simply doing a job and doing it well, twice or three times a week for months.[54]

The new recruits began a harsh regimen of day and night training, their orientation and navigation exercises often taking them across the border; encounters with enemy patrols or village watchmen were regarded as the best preparation for the missions that lay ahead. Some commanders, such as Baum and Sharon, deliberately sought firefights.[55] Unit 101 recruits

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[54] A. Elon, *The Israelis*, 234.

[55] Sharon, *Warrior*, 85. Throughout 1949-56 Israel accused the Arabs—refugees and soldiers—of infiltration, and denied any wilful Israeli infiltration into the West Bank or the Gaza Strip. All cross-border movement was a violation of the armistice agreements. But throughout the period, and especially in the years 1949-53, the IDF routinely mounted training sorties and patrols across the armistice lines, especially into the West Bank. As Dayan wrote in his autobiography: 'Patrols were also conducted across the border. The Navy . . . carried out patrols and landings on the Saudi and Egyptian coasts in the Gulf of Eilat [Aqaba] and rangers in command cars and jeeps crossed the Egyptian border and roamed the Sinai' (Dayan, *Avnei*, 97). The cross-border patrolling owed more to policy than to local commanders' initiatives: It was a standard IDF training feature, especially among infantry and reconnaissance units. Har-Zion described one such training sortie north of the Jerusalem Corridor border in his memoirs, *Pirkei Yoman*, 160-1. Mordechai Gur, who in 1949-51 commanded a Nahal company, refers (in *Peluga Dalet*, 11) to routine cross-border patrols. Later, as commander of Company D, the 890th (paratroop) Battalion, Gur routinely continued to send his men across the border on training patrols (pp. 105-10). See also Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 103. Occasionally, parents of soldiers would complain about these cross-border patrols, which often ended in skirmishes with Jordanian troops or National Guardsmen. For example, Agudat Ihud, a left-wing group founded by I. L. Magnes, complained on 23 Mar. 1953 that there was

> a custom and training method in the IDF . . . whereby soldiers and officers are occasionally sent several kilometres into enemy territory. This is done for two reason: (1) Soldiers and officers must get used to killing people . . . and [learn to] overcome their conscience. . . . (2) Soldiers and officers must get used to 'being under fire' and to return 'fire' when attacked. . . . Several parents . . . were shocked . . . and demanded that we publicize . . . their vigorous protest against such training methods, in which their sons are killed and wounded without a real security need.

Ben-Gurion responded that 'to the best of my knowledge, everything written in your letter is imaginary and without foundation'. Ben-Gurion asked the writers to name the foreign journalist who had given them the story and to name the parents who were worried about their sons' 'imaginary' cross-border escapades. Agudat Ihud declined to divulge the names but repeated the complaint and suggested that Ben-Gurion carry out an 'unbiased' inquiry among those 'in hospitals and find out where and how they were wounded'. Ben-Gurion declined, arguing that the refusal to 'name names' relieved him of the need to respond. And there the matter ended (M. Goldstein, Agudat Ihud Committee, to the chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, 23 Mar. 1953; Ben-Gurion to Goldstein, 25 Mar. 1953; Goldstein to Ben-Gurion, 1 Apr. 1954; Lt.-Col. Nehemia Argov, to Goldstein, 7 Apr. 1953; Ernest Bloch, Agudat Ihud Committee, to Argov, 15 Apr. 1953, all in BGA, Correspondence). Ben-Gurion was clearly aware of the truth. For example, in his diary (entry for 7 May 1953, BGA) there is an explicit reference to an IDF General Staff meeting in which cross-border patrols were discussed. Ben-Gurion wrote:

> Three patrols were sent into action yesterday. Two failed and saw nothing. The third encountered a [Arab] Legion or National Guard unit. There was some shooting. None of our people was hit. According to our people, two of theirs were wounded. I advised that patrols be sent out again.

See also Milstein, *HaTzanhanim*, i. 218-20.

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went on forced marches, and did calisthenics, judo, and weapons and sabotage training, at their base camp at Sataf, an abandoned Arab village just west of Jerusalem. 'Soon I felt I had a group that was ready to strike back,' recalled Sharon. In Unit 101,

> morale was like nothing I had ever seen before . . . group spirit soared. An unusual camaraderie began to take hold . . . a boisterous exuberance . . . . This was a wild group, and I knew they were going to need every ounce of audacity and spirit they could muster for what lay ahead.[56]

Unit 101's troopers believed in the need to avenge Arab attacks. But 'our operations were not accompanied by hatred of the Arabs or any sort of hatred. In all that we were ordered to do we saw a necessity of safeguarding [Israel's] existence', Har-Zion was to recall.[57]

And there was, too, at least some ethical questioning and debate, and, it appears, criticism.[58] The presence in the unit of a number of former Palmah members, older than most of the original recruits, may have contributed to this: 'They . . . were not always in complete agreement with what we were ordered to do,' recalled Har-Zion.[59] Arguments concerned the detail as well as the grand conception—the killing of civilians as well as the purpose and efficacy of the retaliatory policy itself. The problematic concept of 'purity of arms' was debated, with one side (Shlomo Baum) arguing that 'arms don't have to be pure, they have to be clean [for efficient use]'.[60] In an extreme instance, Shmuel Nissim ('Falah'), a Palmah veteran, refused to take part in the operation in August 1953 in the Bureij refugee camp, in the Gaza Strip, arguing that it was against his principles.[61]

But many took a strictly professional line: they were interested merely in doing the job as efficiently as possible. 'I didn't think much about the nature of the operations, their political and security aspects,' Har-Zion later recalled.[62] In October 1953, immediately after Qibya, Sharon assured Ben-Gurion that his men would not turn into 'professionals [i.e. professional killers]'.[63]

The Unit 101 tradition of raiding, and of occasional debate about the nature and purpose of the raids, was carried over in 1954 to the paratroops, with whom Unit 101 merged. Mordechai Gur recalled his troops' debate on the eve of the raid on Beit Liqya (1/2 September 1954). There were

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[56] Sharon, *Warrior*, 85.

[57] Har-Zion, *Pirkei Yoman*, 138. Some of the 101 warriors probably hated Arabs. One of the Unit's commanders had participated in a massacre of Arab villagers at Tlut, in the Galilee, in July 1948.

[58] Milstein, *HaTzanhanim*, i. 219-20.

[59] Har-Zion, *Pirkei Yoman*, 136.

[60] Milstein, *HaTzanhanim*, i. 220.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Har-Zion, *Pirkei Yoman*, 131.

[63] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 22 Oct. 1953, BGA; Sharon, *Warrior*, 90-1.

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> deep and cogent discussions about our retaliatory policy and about the objectives chosen, do the [operations] fulfil their purposes? Should the reprisal be carried out in the area where the original [infiltrator attack] took place? . . . The question of the justification of reprisals against the government and army of this or that neighbouring state also arose, and of course the question of justifying harm to civilians . . . We never accepted as self-evident [the sanctity of] decisions about reprisals . . . We tried to determine afresh our personal position *vis-à-vis* each operation. So it was . . . regarding the reprisal at Beit Liqya. I went to 'Arik' [Sharon] and asked: Why Beit Liqya—the Jews were [*recte* the Jew was] murdered in Moshav Mata [*recte* Ramat Raziel] in the southern Jerusalem Corridor? Arik explained that . . . there was no necessity for political or military reasons, to strike back where we were hit. We must act where we are sure of success and of influencing the enemy . . . I understood and accepted [Sharon's arguments]. It often happened that soldiers went out on an operation without fully agreeing with it.[64]

During the summer of 1953 Arab infiltrators supplied Israel with a stream of provocations and reasons to retaliate. Unit 101's first combat operation was the three-pronged raid on the night of 28/9 August 1953 on a house, suspected of being an infiltrators' base, in the Bureij refugee camp, south of Gaza.[65] The raid came less than a fortnight after an infiltrator attack on a family in Ashkelon, in which a restaurant-owner, Yeshayahu Frankman, had been killed and his 25-year-old daughter, Zipporah, severely injured.[66]

Three Unit 101 squads (about fifteen men) took part, led by Sharon, Baum, and Shmuel Merhav.[67] Sharon's squad was identified prematurely by Arabs and failed to reach its objective. A mob of refugees, some armed, cornered the squad in a house on the edge of the camp. Baum's squad, after shooting its way through the besieging multitude, rescued Sharon's men, and the troops made their escape. (Merhav's three-man squad apparently blew open the gate to the house of Major Mustafa Hafez, the head of Egyptian military intelligence in the Gaza Strip, injuring several civilians. But Hafez was not home and escaped unscathed.) In all, some twenty refugees were killed (including seven women and five children) and twenty-two were wounded. Two Unit 101 soldiers were wounded.[68]

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[64] Gur, *Peluga Dalet*, 130-1.

[65] Drori ('Mediniyut HaGmul', 74), asserts that the Bureij operation was an 'intelligence sortie without any intention of clashing [with Arabs]', but that it turned into a violent raid due to unforeseen circumstances.

[66] 'Recent Border Incidents', Israel Office of Information, New York, undated (but from Oct. 1953), ISA FM 2949/2.

[67] Har-Zion, *Pirkei Yoman*, 163-4. Har-Zion misdates the attack on Bureij 'September' 1953. Milstein (*HaTzanhanim*, i. 220) says the attack occurred on 30 Aug. Wallach and Lissak (eds.) (*Atlas*, 112) date it 31 Aug. 1953. But contemporary US, UK, and UN records date the attack on the night of 28/29 Aug. 1953.

[68] Tyler to SecState, 30 Aug. and 2 Sept. 1953; and 'Memorandum', Egyptian Embassy, Washington, 4 Sept. 1953, all in NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 2; Milstein, *HaTzanhanim*, i. 220-3.

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Foreign observers called the Bureij raid 'an appalling case of deliberate mass murder'.[69] It was apparently followed by soul-searching debates inside Unit 101: 'Is this screaming, whimpering multitude . . . the enemy? . . . How did these *fellahin* sin against us? War is indeed cruel . . . . The depression [among the troops] is general. No one . . . tells stories. All are silent and self-absorbed.'[70] At least one minister, Social Affairs Minister Moshe Shapira, criticized the raid in Cabinet.[71]

'Incident has caused intense alarm and unrest in the whole Strip,' reported the acting director of UNRWA, Leslie Carver. He urged that the United Nations protest strongly to Israel against the 'unprovoked attack upon harmless and defenceless refugees'.[72] Israel denied responsibility, leading diplomats and officials to the conclusion that 'Israeli settlers' or 'a local kibbutz' had carried out the raid on their own initiative.[73]

Lavon had apparently been deceived about the Bureij raid by the IDF high command, both before and after the event. Dayan had apparently asked Lavon for permission to mount a small raid to ambush a car. After the raid, Lavon was told that the raiders had accidentally encountered an Egyptian patrol and been forced to withdraw into the Bureij refugee camp, where they had been forced to kill civilians.[74]

Another early Unit 101 operation was the September 1953 expulsion of bedouin families of the `Azazme tribe from the Auja DMZ, into Egypt. Dayan was to write later that these `Azazme 'served Egyptian intelligence, [by] providing intelligence and in acts of sabotage and mining in Israel'.[75] Sharon, Baum, and fourteen Unit 101 men, together with some Nah"al troops from the Nah"al outpost of Giv`at Rachel (later Ketziot), in the DMZ, mounted on two jeeps and two command cars, and assisted by a reconnaissance aircraft, raided several `Azazme encampments, burning

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[69] Moore to G. H. Baker, FO, 15 Sept. 1953, and minute dated 18 Sept., by Pullen, both PRO FO 371-104788 ER1091/344.

[70] Har-Zion, *Pirkei Yoman*, 163-4. One of the participants, Meir Barbut, later told Milstein that he had felt as if he was killing inhabitants of a (Jewish) immigrants' transit camp (*ma`abara*): 'The boys threw Molotov cocktails at [innocent] people, not at the saboteurs we had come to punish. It was shameful for the 101 and the IDF . . . . [But] the operation wasn't typical of 101 . . . it was a mistake . . . due to inexperience.' Baum, on the other hand, attributed the responsibility for the attack to the infiltrators who had provoked it and who had situated their 'HQ' in the middle of a refugee camp. In any case, 'the Bureij operation frightened the Arabs of the Gaza Strip and achieved its objective. The [infiltrators'] attacks ceased for a while. Whoever takes pity on the Palestinians has a share in the responsibility for the murder of Jews' (Milstein, *HaTzanhanim*, i. 223).

[71] 'Protocol of Cabinet Meeting of 6 Sept. 1953', ISA RG 77, 7264/10.

[72] H. Vigier (Jerusalem) to A. Cordier (New York), 3 Sept. 1953, UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0-1.

[73] Moore, to É. Najar, FM, 15 Sept. 1953, ISA FM 2436/7 bet; Vigier to Cordier, 4 Sept. 1953, UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0-1, Walmsley to FO, 3 Sept. 1953, PRO FO 371-104788 ER1091/340.

[74] E. Kafkafi, 'Ha`Aliya HaHamonit: Shalav BeTahalich HaRevisionizatziya shel HaMedina' (unpublished paper).

[75] Dayan, *Avnei*, 114.

tents and destroying other bedouin property. A number of bedouin were apparently hit in exchanges of fire during the raid.[76]

Qibya

Then came Qibya. As usual, it was provoked by a murderous attack by infiltrators from Jordan who at 1.30 a.m., on 13 October 1953, lobbed a grenade into a house on the eastern edge of the Israeli settlement of Yehud, killing Susan Kanias, 32, and two of her children, Binyamin, aged 18 months, and Shoshana, aged 4, and slightly wounding another child. The perpetrators' tracks led to the Jordanian border.[77] The raid followed the pattern of previous months. On 26 May 1953, a grenade thrown into a house in Beit Nabala had killed a woman and injured her husband and two children; that same night, grenades were also thrown into Israeli houses in neighbouring Deir Tarif and Beit `Arif. On 9 June, a grenade thrown into a house in Tirat Yehuda killed an Israeli settler. On 10 June, a house was blown up in the Israeli settlement of Mishmar Ayalon, killing a woman.[78]

After Yehud, Glubb, fearful of a reprisal, invited Israeli trackers with dogs to follow the perpetrators across the line. It was the first time Jordan had issued such an invitation.[79] But dog and tracker lost the scent just inside Jordan, near the Rantis police station.[80] Glubb told the Israelis that Jordan would 'do the utmost to bring those guilty, if they are in Jordan territory, to justice'.[81] In the MAC meeting of 14 October, Jordan, unusually, voted with Israel and the UN chairman in condemning the Yehud attack. Sharett believed that the Jordanians were resolved to punish the perpetrators. If Israel none the less retaliated, he reasoned, this Jordanian resolve would be undermined.[82]

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[76] Milstein, *HaTzanhanim*, i. 224; Har-Zion, *Pirkei Yoman*, 161-3. Har-Zion was uncomfortable with the operation. He jotted down in his diary: 'Again I have that agonizing doubt: Is this the enemy? Is this justified . . .' Dayan's memory, characteristically, ran to other things. At one point during the operation Dayan took aim with a rifle at a bird flying past. Har-Zion grabbed hold of his arm and said: 'What are you doing? That's an eagle!' (Dayan, *Avnei*, 114).

[77] 'Recent Border Incidents', Israel Office of Information, New York, undated (but from late Oct. 1953), ISA FM 2949/2.

[78] 'Arab Aggression and Israel Counteraction', unsigned and undated, with accompanying note, Y. Tekoah to ?, 29 Aug. 1956, ISA FM 2949/4.

[79] G. Rafael (Jerusalem) to Israel Embassy, Washington, etc., 14 Oct. 1953, ISA FM 2949/10; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 35-7.

[80] In his autobiography (*Warrior*, 86), Sharon mistakenly writes that 'the police investigation indicated that the killers had infiltrated from the direction of Qibya'—five kilometres south of Rantis.

[81] Gen. Bennike, UNTSO, to IDF CGS Gen. Makleff, 14 Oct. 1953, ISA FM 2429/5.

[82] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 35-7, entry for 14 Oct. 1953. The Israeli defence establishment

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The Jordanian village of Qibya, about midway between the Latrun Salient and Qalqilya, regularly appeared in Israeli Intelligence documents of the early 1950s naming infiltrator 'bases'[83] On the morning of 13 October, a vacationing Ben-Gurion met with Acting Defence Minister Lavon, CGS Makleff, and Dayan (Sharett had not been invited) on a hillside to the west of the Sea of Galilee, where an IDF exercise was in progress, and decided on a 'sharp' reaction to the Yehud killings. One of the participants proposed Qibya as the target, and it was decided that fifty of the village's 280 houses should be blown up. The aim was both revenge and deterrence. In the General Staff operational order to Central Command, the attacking force was ordered 'temporarily to conquer the village of Qibya—with the aim of blowing up houses and hitting the inhabitants [*lifgo'a baToshavim*] . . .'. In turn, Central Command's operational instructions to the units were 'to attack and temporarily to occupy the village, carry out destruction and maximum killing, in order to drive out the inhabitants of the village from their homes'.[84]

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and Mapai took a different view of Jordanian behaviour at this time. Dayan wrote of the infiltrations: 'The Jordanian[s] . . . not only failed to prevent [attacks] but helped the murderers and covered those who came from their area and return to it' (*Avnei*, 115). Meir Argov, a Mapai MK, put this (mistaken) view even more forcefully: the terrorism along Israel's borders since 1949 was not by 'incidental embittered infiltrators . . . . [It was] organized by the Arab States . . . . [It was] calculated and organized to soften [Israel's] positions in preparation for a comprehensive round, a second round' (*Divrei HaKnesset*, 15/1 (30 Nov. 1953), 274).

[83] e.g. 'Infiltration in 1952 (a Summary for the Months Jan .-Nov.)', ISA FM 2428/4 aleph, which puts Qibya first in a list of forty-one Jordanian villages to whose outskirts infiltrators were tracked in 1952; deputy DMI, Lt.-Col. Harkabi, to IDF CGS, etc., 6 Aug. 1951, ISA FM 2431/9.

[84] The quotations from the written General Staff and Central Command orders for *Mivtza Shoshana* (Operation Rose), as the raid was called, are from Drori, 'Mediniyut HaGmul', 54. Drori, a former IDF brigade commander, enjoyed privileged access to IDFA files. Teveth (*Dayan*, 392-6), less authoritative, says that 'there is reason to believe' that, at the Ben-Gurion-Lavon-Makleff-Dayan meeting, prospective Jordanian losses were estimated at 10-12 dead. Ben-Gurion, says Teveth, charged in a political campaign speech on 31 July 1965 that Lavon (then a political enemy) had specifically ordered the army to hit civilians. In the pre-attack, oral briefing to Sharon, who commanded the raiders, Dayan instructed that the IDF blow up 'a maximum number of houses, about 50', according to Teveth. Sharon recalled that 'the orders were clear. Qibya was to be a lesson. I was to inflict as many casualties as I could on the Arab home guard [i.e. the NG] and on whatever Jordanian reinforcements showed up. I was also to blow up every major building in the town' (*Warrior*, 88). Again, Sharon is mistaken. The order, as quoted above, was to kill as many Arabs as possible; it did not distinguish between civilians, National Guardsmen, and Legionnaires. Nor apparently, was there mention in any of the orders of 'major' buildings as (perhaps) distinct from residential homes.

Following the raid, Acting Prime Minister Sharett asked Acting Defence Minister Layon for a copy of the operational order (apparently not differentiating between the General Staff/ Operations order and the Central Command order). According to Teveth, Lavon eventually gave Sharett a version of the order from which a particular line had been deleted. Sharett, apparently, only learnt of the crucial deletion—amounting to a deception—a few months later, after he became prime minister. He then noted laconically in his diary, regarding

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Sharett half-heartedly attempted to stop the planned raid before it was launched, after learning of it from his adviser on Middle East affairs, Gideon Rafael. During a recess in the Cabinet meeting of 14 October, Lavon told Sharett that the raid was on. Sharett said it was 'a serious error'—especially since Jordan had promised to do its best to bring the perpetrators to book. 'Pinhas [Lavon] smiled in his usual way . . . It appears that the [acting] defence minister must satisfy his people [i.e. the IDF high command].' Lavon said Ben-Gurion, too, disagreed with Sharett, 'meaning 2 against 1' (i.e. the (acting) defence minister and (vacationing) prime minister versus the foreign minister).[85]

The raid took place that night, on 14/15 October, two days after the Yehud murders, with 130 IDF troops, about one-third from Unit 101 and the rest paratroops (890th Battalion), taking part. The combined force was commanded by Sharon. The two main forces, under paratroop company commander Aharon Davidi and Baum, crossed the border, captured the National Guard position overlooking the village, and then pushed into Qibya, from which many of the inhabitants fled southwards. About a dozen National Guardsmen died in the skirmishing. Three independent squads, one of them commanded by Har-Zion, were sent to the outskirts of Ni'lin, Budrus, and Shuqba, to obstruct Legion reinforcements. At the same time, an IDF 120 mm mortar unit opened up on Budrus to divert Jordanian attention. The blocking squads outside Shuqba and Budrus engaged Jordanian troops on their way to investigate what was happening in Qibya, killing a number. Throughout the raid, the Legion command, left in the dark, made no major effort to relieve the embattled village.

The main body of IDF troops, now inside Qibya, prepared 700 kilograms of explosives for detonation. With no orders to check homes for inhabitants, they blew up forty-five houses. Fifty to sixty civilians, some of them hiding in cellars and attics, died during the conquest of the village and in these demolitions. Some of the troops may have assumed that the houses were empty. After the raid, Sharon reported that the Arabs had suffered ten or twelve dead. There were no IDF casualties. The following day, after sifting through the rubble, the Jordanians revealed that their dead totalled sixty-nine (or, in some reports, seventy), the majority women and children.[86]

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Lavon: 'the forgery of the Qibya order: To kill and destroy, all know that he deceives the prime minister' (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 562, entry for 29 July 1954). Presumably the line excised by Lavon was the one—quoted above—instructing the raiders to kill as many Arabs as possible. After the attack, Sharett asked both Makleff and his own aide de camp, Lt.-Col. Nehemiah Argov, for the Qibya post-battle report, but neither gave him a copy (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 75, entry for 24 Oct. 1953).

[85] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 35-7, entry for 14 Oct. 1953.

[86] A full description of the raid, from the Israeli side, is in Milstein, *HaTzanhanim*, i. 225-33. For the Jordanian side, see 'Three Villages Attacked: 45 Killed', Arab Legion HQ, 16

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According to Israeli accounts, the vast majority of Jordanian dead were victims not of deliberate slaughter but of error, having been blown up in houses that the Israeli troops believed unoccupied. But the preliminary Arab Legion report of 16 October, by which time forty-two bodies had been recovered, thirty-eight of them women and children, maintained that 'nearly all have gun shot or grenade wounds'. According to the report, the Israeli troops had moved through each house 'systematically killing' the inhabitants, before blowing it up. Such behaviour would have been consistent with IDF standard operating procedure at the time for 'combat in a built-up area' (*lohama beShetah banui—lab"ab*), which called for each squad to move from house to house after throwing grenades through the windows, knocking down the front door, and indiscriminately spraying each room with light-weapons fire.[87]

On hearing the result of the operation, Sharett noted in his diary: 'In one village alone 30 houses were destroyed. A reprisal of this magnitude . . . has never been carried out before. I walked back and forth in my room perplexed and completely depressed, feeling helpless.'[88] And a day later, he wrote: 'Had I had a suspicion that there would be so much killing, I would have screamed [against the operation] to high heaven.'[89]

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Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104790 ER1091/429. The Jordanian side, and why the Arab Legion failed to intervene, is explained in Glubb, *Soldier*, 309-15. See also Drori, 'Mediniyut HaGmul', 54. For the blocking action near Shuqba, see Har-Zion, *Pirkei Yoman*, 164-9. Sharon (in *Warrior*, 89), asserts that, before the houses were demolished, 'soldiers were sent to look through each house to make sure no one was inside'. This would seem to be pure invention. Dayan, in the English-language edition of his autobiography, *Story of my Life*, omits all mention of Qibya. In the longer, Hebrew edition (*Avnei Derekh*, 115), he devotes close to a page to the raid, asserting that the death of the villagers was 'no one's fault'.

[87] 'Three Villages Attacked', PRO FO 371-104790 ER1091/429. The US Legation in Amman, probably basing itself on Jordanian reports, conveyed to Washington a similar picture of what had happened in Qibya: 'Israelis systematically exterminated people in houses . . . before blowing [them] up' (T. W. Seelye (Amman) to SecState, 16 Oct. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3). American diplomatic reports from Tel Aviv, probably based on Israeli sources, were similar. The IDF troops 'opened fire on all buildings, shooting through doors and windows, throwing grenades into buildings and fiddling with bullets any villagers who attempted [to] run from houses' (F. Russell (Tel Aviv) to SecState, 17 Oct. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3). A UN report on Qibya, quoted from, but not identified by, Donald Neff (*Warriors at Suez*, 49), seems to confirm the Arab Legion finding that many of the dead had been shot: 'Bullet-fiddled bodies near the doorways and multiple bullet hits on the doors of the demolished houses indicated that the inhabitants had been forced to remain inside until their homes were blown up over them.' Comm. E. H. Hutchison, the US naval officer who served as chairman of the IJMAC, described his arrival in Qibya a few hours after the raid in his memoirs:

> One sight that burned deep into my mind was that of an Arab woman perched high on a pile of rubble. Here and there from between the rocks you could see a tiny hand or foot protruding. The woman's stare was blank . . . . She was sitting on the pile of rocks that held the lifeless bodies of her six children. The bullet fiddled body of her husband lay face down in the dusty road before her. (*Violent Truce*, 44-5)

Aharon Davidi and Shlomo Baum both refused my requests for an interview.

[88] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 39, entry for 15 Oct. 1953.

[89] Ibid. i. 44.

Qibya brought a wave of world condemnation, bordering on revulsion, down on Israel. Britain cabled its ambassador in Tel Aviv to 'express . . . our horror . . . Such action by regular Israel forces makes nonsense of Israeli protestations of readiness to make peace . . .'. Ambassador Evans concluded:

> As the Israel Government are aware, Her Majesty's Government as signatories of the Tripartite Declaration of May 1950, and in view of their obligations under the Anglo-Jordan Treaty, view with the most serious concern any action such as the attack on [Qibya], which imperils the peace of the region.

The veiled threat of implementing the three-power declaration and the Britain-Jordan defence pact was fairly stark.[90]

In Washington, too, there was outrage. When Eban, on 15 October, sent a subordinate to the State Department to complain about the Yehud attack, the American official, Fred Waller, replied: 'I thought that you [had come] to see me about Qibya.' The Israeli diplomat, reported Waller, had not yet heard of the IDF raid. Waller spoke of his 'horror' in 'clear words', and the Israeli 'left in a rather dejected mood'.[91] Both Sharett and Eban made a point of telling US officials that they would 'not say a single word' in justification of Qibya.[92]

Hardliners like Ben-Gurion and Golda Meir tended to doubt, or, at least, said they doubted, the sincerity of Western expressions of moral outrage over Israeli atrocities such as Qibya. These ministers lacked the immediate perspective of close contacts with foreign officials. But Binyamin-Herzl Berger, a Mapai MK, who visited the United States soon after the raid, reported to the Mapai Knesset faction:

> We must understand that what they could understand and forgive about a deed done here, at a place near Jerusalem [i.e. the Deir Yassin massacre by the *IZL*] during the [1948] War of Independence, they will not accept and are unwilling to forgive when it is perpetrated not during war proper . . . and by a state rather than a dissident organization.[93]

Whitehall briefly discussed the possibility of activating the Anglo-Jordanian defence treaty or the Tripartite Declaration, and the consensus in the War Office was that these might have to be invoked if Israel

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[90] FO to Tel Aviv, 15 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104789/ER1091/394; Evans to Sharett, 16 Oct. 1953, ISA FM 2429/5. Israel's ambassador to London, the hard-headed Eliahu Elath, defined the British expressions of outrage and horror as 'perfectly genuine, though exploited for political ends' (Elath to Sharett, 12 Nov. 1953, ISA FM 2440/3 aleph; 'An Extract from the Report of the Israel Ambassador in London from 12 November 1953', and covering note from the director general's bureau to S. Bendor, 1 Dec. 1953, ISA FM 2949/4). Sharett, echoing Elath's phraseology, later told the Knesset of 'the sincere moral outrage' in the West over Qibya (*Divrei HaKnesset*, 15/1 (30 Nov. 1953), 268).

[91] 'Memorandum of Conversation', 15 Oct. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[92] 'Memorandum of Conversation' (Eban, Shiloah, Byroade, Hart), 19 Oct. 1953, and Russell to SecState, 17 Oct. 1953, both in NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[93] Protocol of Mapai Knesset Faction meeting, 11 Jan. 1954, LPA 5-12-11.

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continued with major cross-border raids or launched 'a full scale invasion of Jordan'. The British 'did not want to fight the Israelis, although we would obviously have to do so, if they made a direct attack on Jordan', said the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Harold Redman.[94] British representatives secretly reassured the Jordanian government of Britain's 'intention to defend Jordan in case of war', but added that 'limited reprisal raids' by Israel would not be regarded as a *casus foederis*.[95] Meanwhile, in a minor protest, British attachés observing the IDF exercise in the north were withdrawn from the area.

Within days, Britain sent a small, but symbolic, shipment of light arms from its Canal Zone depots to the Jordanian National Guard, promising further shipments.[96] Whitehall also agreed to station a British armoured squadron at Ma`an, to train with the Legion, but also to deter the Israelis.[97]

But Whitehall's primary aim in the immediate post-Qibya days was to prevent any escalation along the Israel-Jordan frontier.[98] Qibya had given rise to vengeful urges in Amman—'The whole of [Jordan] is clamouring for retaliation'[90]—and there was also a danger of Iraqi intervention. Immediately after Qibya, Iraq had offered Jordan 'any assistance in her power'. Britain had promptly interceded, telling the Iraqis that it would be 'ill-advised' to send troops, as Israel would regard that as a *casus belli*.[100] At the same time, there was also a danger of Israeli-initiated

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[94] 'Extract from COS (53) 121st Meeting Held 27.10.53', and attached letters, PRO FO 371-104926.

[95] 'Military Aid to Jordan in the Event of an Attack by Israel', foreign secretary, 13 Nov. 1953, PRO CAB 129/64.

[96] Middle East Land forces to WO, 13 Nov. 1953, PRO FO 371-104926 ETl192/45 B.

[97] Minutes of Cabinet meeting of 29 Oct. 1953, PRO CAB 128/26; conclusions of Cabinet meetings of 17 and 19 Nov. 1953, PRO CAB 128/26 Pt2. The intention had originally been to station the squadron at Zerka. But, following Qibya and the wave of anti-British demonstrations, the Jordanians proposed that the squadron be stationed, instead, at Ma`an, a less conspicuous site (A. A. Stark, FO, to D. B. Pitblado, 10 Downing Street, 23 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104926 ET1192/36G). Prime Minister Churchill was lukewarm about the dispatch of the squadron, arguing that it was large enough to antagonize the Israelis but too small to deter anyone. But Eden pushed the proposal through the Cabinet.

[98] Sir G. Jebb, UK ambassador to UN, to FO, 16 (?) Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104758 ER1072/35.

[99] G. W. Furlonge (Amman) to FO, 16 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104926. Israeli leaders after Qibya also feared Jordanian retaliation—such as an attack on the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 68, 71, entry for 22 Oct. 1953). IDF intelligence on 22 Oct. apparently picked up signs that the Legion intended to attack Jewish positions on Mount Scopus on 23-4 Oct. (Lt.-Col. W. T. McAninch (Jerusalem) to Cordier for Bennike, 23, 26 Oct. 1953, UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0-1); 'Extract from COS (53) 121st Meeting Held 27.10.1953' and 'Appendix I', MELF to WO, 23 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104926, conveying essence of Glubb letter to Deputy CIGS.

[100] 'BMEO Weekly Political Summary No. 42 [for] Week Ending Oct. 21, 1953', PRO FO 371-104188 E1013/44. Iraq made do with giving Amman £150,000 for the NG (Furlonge to P.S. Falla, FO, 22 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104926 ETl192/42). This grant may have been part of the £2 million sterling pledge by the Arab states for the upkeep of the NG made during a meeting of the Arab League in Amman. The unusual League meeting also initiated

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escalation, in response either to further infiltrator outrages or to Jordanian retaliation.

The American response was more telling. Washington (briefly) held up the first payment of the $26 million Foreign Operation Administration allocation for the first six months of fiscal 1954.[101] American Jewry, for the most part, viewed Qibya 'negatively, occasionally very negatively', according to Israeli officials.[102] Rose Halprin, a leader of the powerful Hadassah woman's Zionist organization, declared that the raid 'was against the "ethical" and moral forces of our tradition. There was not a Zionist nor a Jew who was not mortally wounded by Qibya.'[103] None the less, Jerusalem promptly and successfully mobilized the pro-Israel lobby in Washington in an attempt to reverse the aid suspension. Letters of complaint and intercession reached the State Department from such politicians as Lyndon Johnson and John F. Kennedy. A delegation consisting of Senator Irving Ives, Representative Jacob Javitz, United Synagogues of America president Maxwell Abbell, and Bnai Brith president Philip Klutznick, descended upon the State Department—to be told by an angry John Foster Dulles that they might do better 'working with representatives of the Israeli Government to try to change their policy of presenting the world with *faits accomplis*'. Co-operation, said Dulles, was perceived by Israel as 'a one-way street'.[104]

But US officials were concerned about American Jewry's reaction to Washington's condemnation of Israel and its 'effect on General Eisenhower's and the Administration's political future'. It was 'urgently necessary' to do 'something' to improve the Administration's relations with American Jewry, US Ambassador to the United Nations, Henry Cabot Lodge jun. told Deputy Under-Secretary of State Robert Murphy. Lodge also complained that, immediately after the United States 'went to bat' for the Arabs over Qibya, the Arab delegates at the United Nations abstained on an American-sponsored resolution on Korea.[105] In an effort to soften the blow *vis-à-vis* American Jewry and Israel, American officials generally explained that the aid suspension was linked not to Qibya but to Israel's 'intransigence' over the Bnot Ya`akov (i.e. Hula) water project.[106]

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planning for a pan-Arab military command ('After Qibya', Glubb, 14 Jan. 1954, PRO FO 371-111069 ER1072/10; A. G. Lynch (Amman) to SecState, 24 Oct. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3; Paz, 'HaMishmar HaLe`umi HaYardeni').

[101] Israel delegation to the UN to UN Dept., Israel Foreign Ministry, 27 Oct. 1953, ISA FM 2404/13 aleph.

[102] M. Rivlin, Israel consulate-general, New York, to Memi de Shalit (Israel Embassy, Washington), 28 Oct. 1953, ISA FM 2949/4.

[103] Tyler to State Dept., 16 Jan. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[104] 'Memorandum of Conversation', 26 Oct. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 7.

[105] 'Memorandum of Telephone Conversation', R. Murphy, 22 Jan. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5.

[106] p. T. Hart, director of Office of Near Eastern Affairs, State Dept., to L. Lipsky, chairman of the American Zionist Council, 22 Oct. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 7.

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The impact of the Qibya raid on Jordan was severe. In a move designed both to reassure the West Bank population that it meant to defend them and to deter the IDF from further raids,[107] Amman ordered a reluctant Glubb to deploy the entire Arab Legion in the West Bank by 16 October. Within days, two-thirds of the Legion's combat units were dispersed in relatively small formations around the area, an onerous deployment for the Legion that was to persist well into 1954.[108] Glubb also warned that, should Israel strike again, it might be impossible to restrain the Legion from retaliating.[109]

The Jordanian military response had been triggered by civilian unrest of a type unknown in Jordan since 1948. US diplomats described the situation in Amman as 'verging on hysteria',[110] and there were anti-British, anti-American, and anti-Legion demonstrations in many towns, including Amman. According to Glubb, 'extremist politicians and agitators' were stirring up the border villagers against Britain and the Legion.[111] 'Self and other officers pursued by curses and insults when driving through villages in West Bank,' reported Glubb on 16 October.[112] The Legion, and especially its senior British component, was roundly condemned by opposition figures, West Bank dignitaries, and the Arab press for failing to come to Qibya's aid during the raid. Eight Jordanian members of parliament even alleged that Glubb was in 'Jewish pay'; anonymous pamphlets demanded his 'trial for treason'. Leading Jordanian Cabinet members received threatening letters. According to Glubb, opposition politicians and agitators were exploiting the crisis as a 'golden opportunity [to] overthrow [the] regime'.

Western diplomats believed that the raid had seriously endangered Britain's position in Amman and, perhaps, in the Middle East in general. Russell, the US chargé d'affaires in Tel Aviv, told Sharett: 'Had Israel intended to destroy Britain's position in Jordan, it could not have found a more effective way. The Qibya operation delivered a mortal blow to England and demolished any trust in her [in Amman].' The raid had also undermined Hashemite rule in the West Bank, he added. In the near-hysterical atmosphere of post-Qibya Jordan, Glubb urged Britain to

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[107] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 44-5, entry for 17 Oct. 1953.

[108] 'Jordan's National Guard', Arab Legion HQ, 11 July 1954, PRO FO 371-110925.

[109] Furlonge to FO, 15 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-104788/ER1091/355.

[110] Seelye to SecState, 16 Oct. 1953, in NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[111] The demonstrations are described in detail in Seelye to State Dept., 27 Oct. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3. Much of the incitement took place in mosques, orchestrated by Muslim Brotherhood preachers. In Amman, a 'harangue' on 21 Oct. by a Ba'ath Party activist was cut short by 'a heavy dose of water in the midst of a dangling participle'.

[102] Glubb to Arab Legion Liaison Office, London, 16 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104789 ER1091/385.

impose economic sanctions against Israel or break off diplomatic relations.[113] Eventually, in a gesture to the crowds, a senior British Arab Legion officer, Brigadier 'Teal' Ashton, and three junior Arab officers were cashiered for not responding adequately or quickly enough during the night of Qibya.[114] Arab governments called in British and American diplomats and raked them over the coals for Israel's actions.[115]

Some British officials concurred with Glubb's suspicion that Qibya was not merely a reprisal raid but was designed to empty the village of its population, perhaps to help Israel extend its borders or to provoke a mass evacuation of border villages that might ease the infiltration problem. As one British official minuted, 'this may be what the Israelis want . . . Violence of an extreme nature has paid them such large dividends in the past that they must regard it as a course to embark upon with equanimity.'[116] Other British officials suggested that Israel was trying to bludgeon Jordan into resuming the peace talks broken off with King `Abdullah's assassination.[117] American officials suggested other possibilities such as that Qibya was designed to 'thwart U.S. solutions [i.e. peace-making proposals] to area problems'.[118] Foreign observers were clearly at a loss to understand an Israeli reprisal of such deadliness and magnitude. But Evans suggested that 'it is just possible the operation got out of hand and the slaughter and destruction became greater than intended'.[119]

The Israeli public was not, for the most part, unduly perturbed by the raid, and became growingly resentful of Western condemnations during the following weeks. By the time the Knesset debated the raid, on 30 November, there was a virtual consensus in support of Qibya, with only a very few expressions of distress or apology at the loss of so many civilian lives. The general tone of the debate was one of indignation against the world that was moved and outraged at Jews spilling Arab blood but ignored the provocation of Arabs spilling Jewish blood. All MKs accepted,

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[113] Glubb to Melville, Arab Legion Liaison Office, London, 19 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104790 ER1091/430; Glubb to Melville, 20 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104790; Furlonge to FO, 16 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104926; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 132, entry for 10 Nov. 1953. See also 'Monthly Situation Report for Jordan for the Month of Oct. 1953', British Embassy, Amman, PRO FO 371-104887.

[114] 'Situation Report for Jordan for the Month of Dec. 1953', British Embassy, Amman, PRO FO 371-110874 VJ1014/1.

[115] See, e.g., R. M. A. Hankey (Cairo) to FO, 16 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104789 ER1091/369.

[116] Minute, H. Pullen, 19 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104789. See also 'BMEO Weekly Political Summary No. 42 [for] Week Ending Oct. 21, 1953', PRO FO 371-104188 E1013/44.

[117] Evans to Eden, 8 Dec. 1953, PRO FO 371-111057 VR1011/1.

[118] Russell (Tel Aviv) to SecState, 16 Oct. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[119] Evans to FO, 17 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104789 ER1081/131.

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and usually emphasized, the Ben-Gurion-inspired pretence that Qibya was carried out by angry Jewish border settlers.[120]

The execration abroad and the flurry of sanctions placed Israeli decision-makers in a difficult position. The idea of an apology was never seriously entertained; disinformation, more in tune with the national mood, was seen as vastly preferable. In a meeting between Foreign Ministry and IDF officers on 16 October, a senior ministry official, Shmuel Bendor, proposed that Israel declare that 'the army had no part in the operation but that the border settlers, angered beyond endurance by the recent murders . . . rose up as one man and took revenge . . .'.[121] Blaming vigilantes conformed with previous Israeli government practice. Sharett, according to his diary, at first resisted this version of events, arguing that it 'would make us the object of derision and contempt, as everyone knows that the IDF did it'.[122]

Israel's representatives abroad, initially left in a state of embarrassing ignorance and confusion,[123] quickly expressed horror and outrage. Eban, cabling from Washington on 16 October, asked to come to Jerusalem to report to the Cabinet on 'the terrible deterioration' in Israel's standing in the United States and other countries, and among world Jewry, following

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[120] Former Social Affairs Minister Y. M. Levin was unique in the debate in condemning the murder of women and children at Qibya as 'contrary to Jewish ethics', albeit while highlighting the extenuating circumstances. For the full debate see *Divrei HaKnesset*, 15/1 (30 Nov. 1953, 7 Dec. 1953). For other assessments of Israeli public opinion, see Walmsley to Baker, FO, 20 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104789 ER1091/418: '[In] the reaction of the Israeli public . . . regret is nowhere to be found except in some cases'. Walmsley wrote that, whereas the 1946 IZL bombing of Jerusalem's King David Hotel or the 1948 Deir Yassin massacre had aroused 'horror and disgust' in the Yishuv, Qibya prompted 'no voice . . . raised in protest'. On 16 Oct. 1953 the *Jerusalem Post* ran an editorial characterized by what the British ambassador to Tel Aviv called a 'deplorably callous attitude to the massacre of so many innocent people'. Evans charged that this was 'representative' of the attitude adopted also by all the Hebrew press. He quoted from a leader in *Zmanim*, a Progressive Party publication: 'The [IDF] language of open and brutal force is the only one intelligible to the [Arab] murderers of women and arsonists.' Evans concluded: 'The Government of Israel have not very often received from the Israel press so wide a measure of unanimity in their support as on this outstandingly unworthy occasion' (Evans to FO, 27 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104790 ER1091/442). A serious debate about Qibya and the retaliatory policy was conducted on 21 Oct. 1953 in the Political Committee of Mapam, the left-wing opposition party. Some members criticized the policy (protocol of Political Committee of Mapam meeting, 21-6 Oct. 1953, HHA 90 66 aleph (9)). But the meeting was followed by the publication on 26 Oct. of a party communiqué condemning the infiltrators and supporting the retaliatory policy. Qibya was criticized only to the extent that it had given 'our enemies an excuse' to present 'the victims [Israel] as the aggressors'.

Sharett was not being particularly accurate when he instructed Elath to assert, at a planned meeting with Eden, that Qibya had 'shocked our public and caused it deep sorrow . . .' (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 103, entry for 2 Nov. 1953).

[121] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 44, entry for 16 Oct. 1953. Teveth, *Dayan*, 395, quotes Makleff as saying that it was Ben-Gurion who first proposed, at an IDF staff meeting on 15 Oct., that the border settlers rather than the army be blamed for Qibya.

[122] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 44, entry for 16 Oct. 1953.

[123] Eban to Eytan, 15 Oct. 1953, ISA FM 2949/14.

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'the savage assault on the neighbouring [Jordanian] villages' and water diversion activities along the border with Syria. Discerning a breakdown in American trust, Eban felt that the time had come for Israel to increase the relative weight of foreign relations considerations in its decision-making.[124] Eban's eventual assessment was that the wildness and savagery that had characterized Qibya had 'brought our international standing to the edge of the abyss . . . This operation was the first since the establishment of our state that world Jewry refused to identify with . . . Even Deir Yassin did not evoke such nausea . . .' A repeat of Qibya, he thought, would probably lead to 'British military intervention with American support' and possibly to UN intervention *à la* Korea. Eban defined Qibya as 'the greatest injury to the state's security since the end of the War of Independence [in 1948]'. Implicitly criticizing the retaliatory policy, he recommended that the IDF concentrate on 'fortifying the Border' with 'barbed wire, mines and guards'. (He also proposed that, if necessary, Israeli Arab border villagers be uprooted and moved away from the frontier.)[125]

Elath, Israel's ambassador in London, echoed Eban in a scathing seven-page critique to Sharett: 'In all my three and a half years in London I cannot recall such uniform and unqualified criticism of Israel.' He quoted Churchill as saying that he had not felt such shock since the murder by the *LHI* of Britain's minister-resident in the Middle East, Lord Moyne, in Cairo in 1944. 'Many of our old and devoted friends . . . were shocked and acutely disappointed,' wrote the ambassador. Qibya had strengthened the traditional anti-Israel elements in the British establishment, and one could not lightly dismiss the threat of British intervention or sanctions should Israel carry out another such raid. He repeated the gist of his stern message to Jerusalem sent the day after the raid: 'We severely endangered the good name and honour of Israel, on which depends, to such a large extent, our very existence; we have driven away our friends, strengthened our enemies and with our own hands have pushed ourselves into political isolation.'[126]

The protests of Israel's representatives abroad and the bitter criticism of the raid by some of Sharett's aides in Jerusalem,[127] had considerable impact on Sharett. The post-Qibya diplomatic onslaught on Israel was, he said, 'one of the most dangerous battles we have had since the

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[124] Eban to Sharett, 16 Oct. 1953, ISA FM 2440/3 aleph.

[125] Eban to Sharett, 22 Nov. 1953, ISA FM 2432/3. See also Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 140-1, entry for 11 Nov. 1953.

[126] Ibid. i. 131, entry for 10 Nov. 1953; 'An Extract from the Report by Israel's Ambassador to London from 12 Nov. 1953', ISA FM 2949/4.

[127] Rafael to Sharett, 16 Oct. 1953, ISA FM 2453/5; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 236, entry for 16 Dec. 1953; 'Our Propaganda after Qibya', A. Eilan to director general, 22 Nov. 1953, ISA FM 2428/4 aleph.

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establishment of the state, perhaps the worst since the [Arab armies'] invasion [of 15 May 1948] . . . ' He, too, warned of possible 'British military intervention . . .' should Qibya be repeated.[128]

But private gloom and criticism aside, Sharett understood that the best defence was attack. To prevent an exclusive Western focus on Qibya, Sharett proposed that Israel try to widen the area of international discourse to include the general manifestations of Arab hostility: infiltration, Egypt's maritime blockade, and so on.[129]

Damage Control

Damage control in the post-Qibya period occasioned a round of major Sharett-Ben-Gurion clashes in which, as usual, the foreign minister was worsted. The two met on 18 October to discuss the agenda for the upcoming Cabinet meeting. To Sharett's surprise and dismay, Ben-Gurion wished to present a survey of plans for restructuring the army. Sharett felt the Cabinet should hear a report on Qibya and its repercussions. He demanded a reform of the decision-making process on reprisals. Hitherto, Ben-Gurion, who was both prime minister and defence minister, had decided alone, after consulting one or two generals. Now, Sharett argued for a wider decision-making forum, the dormant Ministerial Defence Committee. Sharett proposed that the matter be brought before the full Cabinet for decision.

Ben-Gurion countered by asking that Sharett bring his proposal before the Mapai ministerial caucus. Sharett acquiesced. Later that day, Ben-Gurion lied to the Cabinet ('a slightly peculiar formulation of the facts,' in Sharett's phrase) when he said that he 'had not been consulted about the Qibya operation, as I was on vacation, but had [I been asked, I would have] sanctioned the action'.[130]

The Cabinet empowered Ben-Gurion to formulate a communiqué on Qibya. Sharett asked that an apology be included. But Ben-Gurion insisted that the statement completely absolve the IDF (and the state) of responsibility. Israeli border settlers were responsible, said Ben-Gurion, defining the thrust of the proposed statement.[131]

After the Cabinet meeting the Mapai ministerial caucus met and Sharett tabled his proposed change in the decision-making process for reprisals.

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[128] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 90, entry for 28 Oct. 1953.

[129] Ibid. i. 98, entry for 18 Oct. 1953.

[130] In an exchange of notes during the 18 Oct. Cabinet meeting, Ben-Gurion, according to Sharett, also pretended to be unaware that Sharett had objected to the raid before it was launched (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 50, entry for 18 Oct. 1953).

[131] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 48-51, entry for 18 Oct. 1953.

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Ben-Gurion countered that henceforward he would consult Sharett; if there was disagreement, the matter would be brought before the full Cabinet. The caucus ruled in accordance with Ben-Gurion's proposal: the prime minister, defence minister, and foreign minister would decide. If there were disagreements, any of the three could raise the matter before the full Cabinet for decision. Only Finance Minister Eshkol criticized 'the exaggerated scope' of the Qibya operation.[132]

The following day, 19 October, the Cabinet convened again in emergency session and Ben-Gurion read out his proposed communiqué on Qibya. The ministers formally approved it, Sharett subsequently polishing the text in Ben-Gurion's office.[133] Ben-Gurion then personally broadcast it to the nation:

> Frontier settlements in Israel, mostly of Jewish refugees from Arab countries or survivors of Nazi concentration camps—for years formed the target of murderous raids . . . The Government of Israel responded by giving them arms and training them to defend themselves. [But] the armed bands from Jordan persisted in their criminal attacks until the patience of some of these frontier settlements was exhausted. After a mother and her two children were killed in their sleep . . . in Yehud . . . they attacked the village of Qibya . . . one of the main centres of these murderous gangs. Each one of us grieves the shedding of blood wherever it may occur. None deplores it more than the Government of Israel, if . . . innocent blood was spilled. But all responsibility rests with the Government of Jordan . . . . The Government of Israel rejects with all vigour the absurd and fantastic allegation that 600 men of the IDF took part in the action . . . . We have carried out a searching investigation and it is clear beyond doubt that not a single army unit was absent from its base on the night of the attack on Qibya.[134]

Sharett decided to make further use of the specious government communiqué, instructing Elath (and perhaps other Israeli diplomats) to

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[132] Ibid i. 53, 55, entry for 18 Oct. 1953. Ben-Gurion, in his diaries, gives a different version of the Mapai ministerial caucus decision. He wrote that it was agreed that 'the defence minister must decide [on reprisals], with the knowledge of the prime minister and foreign minister' (Ben-Gurion diary, entry for 22 Oct. 1953, BGA). But Ben-Gurion's diary would appear to be incorrect and misleading. At the meeting of the Mapai Knesset faction on 28 Oct., Meir Argov informed his colleagues that the party ministerial caucus had ruled that 'generally 3 ministers or 2 ministers must determine the response: The defence minister, the prime minister and the foreign minister . . . . If there was disagreement between them, the whole matter would be brought before the Cabinet if the dissenter demanded it' (protocol of Mapai Knesset faction meeting, 28 Oct. 1953, LPA 4-2-11). Argov's reference to '2 ministers' appears to have addressed the unusual existing situation, in which Ben-Gurion was both prime minister and defence minister.

[133] 'Minute of the Cabinet Meeting on 19 Oct. 1953', ISA RG 77, 7264/10; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 55, entry for 19 Oct. 1953; Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 22 Oct. 1953, BGA.

[134] 'Statement by the Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. David Ben-Gurion, in a Broadcast over the Israel State Radio, on Oct. 19, 1953, Dealing with the Recent Border Incidents', ISA FM 2453/5. Eban subsequently complained that Ben-Gurion's statement had lacked both courage and frankness—causing Ben-Gurion to explode (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 140-1, entry for 11 Nov. 1953).

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argue that the very fact that Israel's representatives had had nothing to say about Qibya during the first four days after the raid was itself cogent testimony that the operation had caught Sharett and his colleagues by surprise. Had it been 'officially planned', surely the government would have had its version prepared in advance. Hence, the communiqué was true—Qibya had been an unplanned, vigilante reprisal by border settlers. Sharett's aides further suggested that the government should go through the motions of seeking out and punishing the vigilantes responsible, thus reinforcing the official explanation.[135]

Throughout the affair, Sharett exhibited profound moral elasticity, simultaneously instructing his diplomats to lie about Qibya and expressing wonderment at Ben-Gurion's bare-faced mendacity. Sharett told his wife, Zipora: 'I would have resigned had I been asked to stand in front of the microphone and broadcast to the nation and the world a dishonest version of what happened.'[136]

Few foreign observers were taken in by Ben-Gurion's lies. As Evans, the British ambassador to Tel Aviv, put it: 'It is hard to accept the Prime Minister's denial . . . in view of: (1) The few days' delay before the issue of the statement. (2) The heavy offensive weapons e.g. Bangalore torpedoes [used].'[137] Britain's co-ordinating agency for Middle East policy, the Middle East Office in Cairo, rejected the vigilante story even more categorically: 'It is clear that the Qibya affair cannot have been carried out by irregulars and must have been organised by regular armed forces.'[138] The American Embassy in Tel Aviv similarly dismissed the story: '. . . No question but that [Qibya] action carried out by IDF . . . [with] careful planning . . .'[139]

None the less, Ben-Gurion's broadcast had sowed some doubt in Western minds. Anglo-Saxon diplomats, especially, found it difficult to believe that the prime minister of a friendly, democratic state was practising deceit with such equanimity. For weeks after the broadcast, Western officials sought an explanation that would square with both their belief

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[135] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 54, entry for 19 Oct. 1953.

[136] Ibid. i. 59-60, entry for 20 Oct. 1950. The deception about Qibya was not restricted to a public broadcast and meetings with Western diplomats. Acting Defence Minister Lavon repeated the vigilantes story at a closed meeting of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee on 20 Oct. (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 58, entry for 20 Oct. 1953).

[137] Evans to FO, 20 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104789 ER1091/386.

[138] 'BMEO Weekly Political Summary No. 42 [for] Week Ending Oct. 21, 1953', PRO FO 371-104188 E1013/44.

[139] Russell to SecState, 19 Oct. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3. The US consulate in Jerusalem took the same line (Tyler to SecState, 21 Oct. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3). Tyler reported that the Israeli public was 'deliberately misled' by the Israeli government and press about border events. This was easily done, Tyler explained, as the Israelis suffered from an 'almost total inability to see any side but their own and the self-righteous belief in the justice of their own cause'.

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in IDF involvement and Ben-Gurion's statement blaming the raid on vigilantes. Thus, in mid-December 1953, the British War Office suggested that the raid had been carried out by IDF Nah"al Corps 'trainees' stationed in Kibbutzim across the border from Qibya.[140] But, eventually, everyone or almost everyone was convinced that Qibya had been an official Israeli military action.

November was dominated by the UN Security Council debate on Qibya, with Israel seeking to avert a condemnation that would not, at the same time, condemn the murderous infiltrations that had led to the raid. Also sought by Israel was Great Power endorsement of, and pressure on Jordan to accede to, direct high-level Israeli-Jordanian negotiations to resolve the border problems.[141]

It was a clever Israeli ploy. By acceding to such talks, Jordan would have demonstrated that forceful Israeli military action paid diplomatic dividends, and its Arab neighbours (and antagonists) would have accused it of moving towards a separate peace with Israel. If Jordan refused to hold the talks, the onus of blocking resolution of the border troubles would fall visibly on Jordan's shoulders: the Arabs would again be seen as the ones who declined to negotiate.

For weeks, the UN secretary general and the US exerted intense pressure on Jordan to agree to a 'conference'.[142] But Amman, also under pressure from fellow Arab states[143] and its own irate, anti-Israeli public, rejected all overtures and blandishments.

Meanwhile, Glubb and British representatives in the Arab world pressed Whitehall to adopt a stridently anti-Israeli tone and back anti-Israeli sanctions or, at least, the threat of sanctions, in the Security Council. Britain, Glubb felt, would suffer a 'disastrous eclipse' in the region if she adopted an even-handed approach.[144] But Whitehall preferred a more balanced formula. Britain could 'not leave entirely out of account the background to Qibya and the share of responsibility which the Arabs bear for the failure to negotiate a settlement'.[145]

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[140] Lt.-Col. D. Macfie, Camerons, WO, London, to Falla, 18 Dec. 1953, PRO FO 371-104806 ER1201/14. One respected British military figure, Gen. B. Horrocks, while on a visit to Israel, was persuaded by his hosts that the IDF had had no part in Qibya. Horrocks later told his British interlocutors that 'it had certainly not been carried out by the regular army, which was on manœuvres in Galilee at the time' ('Record of Discussion', Lord Reading, 18 Dec. 1953, PRO FO 371-104806).

[141] Untitled memo., Sir W. Strang, 28 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104790 ER1091/439; Eban to UN Secretary-General, 23 Nov. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5.

[142] A. G. Lynch (Amman) to SecState, 28 and 30 Nov. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[143] L. D. Mallory (Amman) to SecState, 2 Dec. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[144] J. C. B. Richmond (Amman) to FO, 12 Nov. 1953, PRO FO 371-104926 ETl192/45; FO to British Embassy, Baghdad, 14 Nov. 1953, PRO FO 371-104760 ER1072/109; Glubb to Melville, 15 Nov. 1953, PRO FO 371-104790.

[145] FO to British Embassy, Baghdad, 14 Nov. 1953, PRO FO 371-104760 ER1072/109;

(Footnote continued on next page)

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In the event, the Security Council resolution of 24 November 1953, which explicitly condemned Israel in terms of the 'strongest censure', was 'worse than anything we had imagined', said Sharett. The call on the parties to negotiate peace, which had been part of the original wording, was omitted and the reference to infiltration as the source of the problem was mealy-mouthed.[146]

Jordan successfully withstood Great Power pressure to agree to high-level talks with Israeli. As the Jordanian prime minister told the acting director of UNRWA, Leslie Carver: 'No Jordan leader could in present [post-Qibya] circumstances undertake bilateral discussion [with Israel] which would immediately be labelled peace negotiations.' Qibya had made it impossible for Jordan's leaders even to contemplate discussing peace.[147]

The Security Council resolution sparked a heated Cabinet debate in Jerusalem. Sharett, attacking the Activists, said the raid had 'deeply shocked' Israeli public opinion, bewildered Israel's friends abroad, and 'completely isolated' Israel in the Security Council. Golda Meir condemned those Israelis, like Sharett, who added insult to injury by following the Security Council's lead. It was not moral fervour but political expediency that lay behind the Great Powers' stance, she argued. Yisrael Rokah, minister of interior, Dov Yosef, the minister of development, and Yosef Serlin, the minister of health, all criticized the tendency of some Israelis to 'self-flagellation'. Sharett was isolated.[148]

But his stand was much appreciated by British and American diplomats in Tel Aviv, even though he was understood to be 'ineffective' against 'Ben-Gurion and the tough men in the cabinet'.[149]

Results

Qibya had had clear, negative diplomatic repercussions for Israel. But the real question for the raid's architects was whether it had succeeded in reducing terrorist infiltration.

There was no clear answer. Understandably, Israeli policy-makers and officials tended to select from and use post-Qibya statistics to promote

(Footnote continued from previous page)

Evans to FO, 19 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104758 ER1072/20. Evans's dispatches from Tel Aviv seem to have had a major pro-Israeli 'balancing' effect on Foreign Office policy-making.

[146] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 170, entry for 20 Nov. 1953; *Divrei HaKnesset*, 15/1 (30 Nov. 1953), 268; statement by Prime Minister, 22 Nov. 1953, BGA.

[147] L. Carver to UN Secretary-General, 29 Dec. 1953, PRO FO 371-111068 VR1071/6; Furlonge to FO, 22 Dec. 1953, PRO FO 371-104764 ER1072/249.

[148] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 200, entry for 29 Nov. 1953.

[149] Evans to K. Helm (Ankara), 1 Dec. 1953, PRO FO 371-104745. Evans wrote: 'It was and remains a mystery that such intelligent people as the Israel leaders can be so blind to the consequences of their violent actions, and so deaf to the advice of their friends.'

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their own visions of reality and their own policies. The Israel security forces' assessment was that the raid had had a major impact on infiltration in the Qibya area: local villagers were terrified, the Arab Legion had been deployed along the borders, and it was now making strenuous, and often successful, efforts to curb the infiltrators. As one senior Israel Foreign Ministry official put it in June 1955:

> The Qibya action had very concrete and positive results concerning pacification of the border along the whole line from Latrun to Tulkarm. This area was extremely lawless up to October 1953 . . . . Though prior to Qibya there were smaller [IDF] retaliatory strikes in this area, these had no psychological impact on the villagers. Hitting the [infiltrator] gangs also had no effect as new ones always emerged. But . . . Qibya changed the situation radically in this sector. Now the local villagers and the Legion are endeavouring to prevent clashes . . . . Indeed, it is surprising that the shock of Qibya is effective to this day and continues to cause fear and to deter.[150]

The radical decrease in infiltration in the Latrun-Tulkarm sector was immediately noted by Israeli intelligence. During the week following Qibya, the shock in the area was so great that infiltration ceased altogether, and it declined considerably in that sector during November-December 1953 (compared with the same months in 1952). In December 1953 IDF intelligence noted that the 'much lower number' of infiltration incidents on the Jordanian front during November had mainly been due to 'the fear still felt by the [Jordanian] border population following the Qibya incident' and to 'the steps apparently taken by the Jordanian authorities'.[151]

But the thrust of the defence establishment's statistics—which served to justify Qibya—was not accepted by other sections of the establishment. Five weeks after the raid, Eban wrote: 'Information arriving from Israel confirms the assumption that we gained no local military advantage [from Qibya] . . . . In other words, the infiltration movement continues as before and Qibya brought no solution.'[152] Gideon Rafael, Sharett's adviser on Middle East affairs, echoed Eban: There are those, he said, 'who are trying

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[150] 'On the Retaliatory Strikes along the Borders', P. Eliav, 5 June 1955, ISA FM 2448/15.

[151] 'The Activities along the Borders . . . Nov. 1953', IDF Intelligence Dept., 20 Dec. 1953, ISA FM 2428/10. The drop in the absolute number of infiltration incidents along the whole of the Jordanian border was due in large measure to the radical drop in the number of such incidents in the Latrun-Tulkarm sector. There may also have been a seasonal component in this drop in infiltration during the winter of 1953-4. Some Israeli observers also attributed this decline in infiltration to increased Israeli patrolling, especially by the Border Police ('A General Summary of the Situation along Israel's Borders in the Month of Sept. [1954] Compared to the Previous Months', probably written by IDF Intelligence Branch, undated, ISA FM 2429/8 aleph). Infiltration, which had peaked in 1952-3, was in general decline by the end of 1953. The factors that caused this decline most certainly contributed to the drop in infiltration along the West Bank border, including the Latrun-Tulkarm sector.

[152] Eban to Sharett, 22 Nov. 1953, ISA FM 2432/3.

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to spread the impression that following the Qibya operation there was a reduction in infiltration . . . There is no proof for this assumption . . . There has always been a drop in infiltration in the winter months.'[153] Indeed, at least one foreign observer noted an *increase* in terrorist raids against Israel during the 16 October-5 November period and linked it to Israel's inability or reluctance to launch retaliatory strikes while Qibya was under discussion at the UN Security Council.[154]

Qibya and the resulting diplomatic furore certainly increased the anti-Israeli motivation of would-be Arab saboteurs and terrorists, and, temporarily, curbed Israel's ability to strike back. A major infiltrator attack, on the Tel Aviv-Haifa train on 22 October near Kibbutz Eyal, which at any other time might have prompted an immediate IDF reaction, was allowed to pass without response.[155]

Moreover, while post-Qibya infiltration statistics, and their meaning, may have been in dispute, the chain of events triggered by Qibya, and particularly the deployment of the Legion along the Jordan-Israel border, certainly did lead to a marked increase in clashes between the regular forces of the two countries. Qibya had increased Legion and National Guard bellicosity and points of contact and friction along the line. During 1954 there were 145 clashes between troops along the Israel-Jordan border as compared with forty-seven such clashes in 1953.[156]

Qibya's long-term fruits were disputed for years in the Israeli bureaucracies.[157] But the last word on Qibya must go to Dayan, one of the raid's architects. Qibya and the world's condemnation in its wake, according to Dayan, proved that 'what was allowed to Arabs—and to other peoples—would not be forgiven the Jews or Israel'. The West, world Jewry, and Israel's citizenry 'expected' the IDF to abide by its professed doctrine of 'purity of arms'. So 'Israel has learnt that even when the Arabs attack innocent civilians, our responses must be directed against military

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[153] Rafael to foreign minister, 31 Dec. 1953, ISA FM 2474/13 aleph. This last assertion was strongly disputed by Tawil of the Foreign Ministry Research Department, who said that infiltration normally *increased* in Nov.-Dec. each year (Tawil to Eilan, 10 Jan. 1954, ISA FM 2429/6 aleph).

[154] Moore to Baker, FO, 10 Nov. 1953, PRO FO 371-104791 ER1091/455.

[155] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 65-6, entry for 22 Oct. 1953.

[156] 'On the Retaliatory Strikes along the Borders', Eliav, ISA FM 2448/15. According to the Eliav figures, there was also a marked rise in clashes between the regular forces of Israel with those of Egypt and Syria in 1954. Along the Israel-Egypt border there were 5 such clashes in 1953 as compared with 71 in 1954. Along the Syria-Israel border there were 14 such clashes in 1953 and 24 in 1954. This increase in incidents along the Syrian and Egyptian borders was not directly connected to Qibya—though it was linked to the general increase in Israeli-Arab tensions in which Qibya played a role.

[157] See, e.g., 'Report on the Activities, Plans and Possibilities of Action of the Bureau of the Adviser in Charge of Middle East Affairs and Political Matters at the UN', Rafael to foreign minister, 14 June 1955, ISA FM 2446/1; Tekoah to S. Ben-Dor, Israel Embassy, Paris, 13 June 1955, ISA FM 2402/13.

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objectives'.[158] Qibya thus resulted in a portentous conceptual shift in the strategy of retaliation: after Qibya, the IDF struck at Arab military objectives rather than villages and towns. Qibya can thus be said to have led to that series of Israeli strikes against the Egyptian army in 1954 and early 1955 which, in turn, led to the Egyptian responses—Fedayeen attacks and the Czech arms deal—that eventually triggered the 1956 Sinai-Suez war.

[158] Dayan, *Avnei*, 115.

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9
Israel, the Arab States, and the Great Powers, 1952-1956

The Western Powers and the Middle East

As we have seen, the United States and Britain both hoped to see an Israel-Arab settlement. The conflict tended to undermine Arab-Western relations and, at least theoretically, opened the door to Soviet penetration. Dulles and British officials like Shuckburgh were 'convinced that the USSR was plotting and planning to gain control of the Middle East'.[1] Israeli-Arab hostilities might result in East-West confrontation. Similarly, there existed a danger that, in line with the provisions of the Tripartite Declaration and the Anglo-Jordanian defence pact, such hostilities could suck Britain (and perhaps the United States) into armed conflict with one or other of the local parties. The increase in frequency and size of Israeli-Jordanian and Israeli-Egyptian border clashes during 1953-6 correspondingly increased the danger. Both British and Israeli leaders acknowledged, and were at times deterred by, this threat.[2]

The Anglo-Jordanian treaty made Britain more vulnerable than the United States in this respect. During the late 1940s and the 1950s one of Whitehall's primary aims was to keep its foreign and defence policies aligned with those of the United States. But the Anglo-Jordanian treaty, as seen from London in 1954-5, left Britain 'dangerously isolated' from her co-signatories in the Tripartite Declaration.[3] Britain was committed to the survival of both Jordan and its Hashemite regime, as a matter of history and tradition, and of vital interests. Whitehall believed that the survival of the sister Hashemite regime in Baghdad depended, in some measure, on the survival of Jordan and its regime. And Britain's vital oil supplies depended, as London saw things, on continued close ties between Baghdad and London.[4] But Britain was alone. She was committed to Jordan's defence in circumstances that did not bind the United States and France.

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[1] 'Memorandum of Conversation' (J. F. Dulles, George Allen, Fraser Wilkins and Ahmed Hussein, Egypt's ambassador to Washington), 17 Oct. 1955, NA RG 59,611.74/10-1755, Box 2546.

[2] In the Knesset on 19 June 1956 Ben-Gurion countered demands that Israel attack Jordan with: 'doesn't [the honourable gentleman] know that we will meet the British army there? There is a military treaty between Britain and Jordan, and England has an army there' (quoted in Drori, 'Mediniyut HaGmul', 38).

[3] Minute by Shuckburgh, 5 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-115834 VR 1071/122.

[4] Minutes of Cabinet-level meeting, 23 Jan. 1956, PRO CAB 130-111.

Moreover, Israeli-Jordanian clashes during the early and mid-1950s repeatedly threatened to result in the dispatch to Jordan of an Iraqi expeditionary force—an eventuality that Israel, almost as repeatedly, warned would result in an Israeli invasion of the West Bank (and perhaps of the East Bank as well). Again, Britain with air bases in Iraq, and, from April 1955, a defence treaty with Baghdad, might be sucked in. Britain repeatedly tried to restrain Iraq (and Jordan) in this context, and ward off the dispatch of such an expeditionary force.[5]

As early as October 1953 (Qibya), Britain found itself in 'an extremely awkward position', caught between its treaty obligations to defend Jordan and its reluctance to go to war against Israel.[6] The awkwardness was heightened by the feeling among some British officials that Israel had a good case and that Jordan was persistently 'delinquent' about infiltration.[7]

Whitehall continually worried about possible Anglo-Israeli hostilities. In spring and summer 1955, with Israeli-Egyptian tension threatening to escalate into a war, which, in turn, threatened to draw Jordan in on Egypt's side, the British high command approved plans to attack Israel, in the event of an IDF assault on Jordan. Whitehall suspected that an Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip would be prompted not by a desire to savage Egypt or to conquer the Strip—'the Israelis have little real interest in taking over the Gaza Strip'—but by the aim of drawing in Jordan and thus providing the IDF with the opportunity of conquering the West Bank. Britain warned Jordan against 'precipitately' coming to Egypt's aid.[8] London and Washington consulted and co-ordinated; joint economic and military sanctions against Israel were devised.[9]

Despite the dangers, Britain's commitment to Jordan's territorial

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[5] See, e.g., minute by P.S. Falla, 12 Apr. 1954, PRO FO 371-111100 VR1091/65.

[6] The phrase was used by the Minister of State at the Foreign Office, S. Lloyd, at his meeting with Eban on 30 Oct. (memo. of conversation, 30 Oct. 1953, PRO FO 371-104759 ER1072/84). The reluctance was based partly on an appreciation that 'there would be little public enthusiasm in this country [i.e. Britain] for the employment of British troops, on either side, in a war between Arabs and Israelis' (Cabinet Meeting minutes, 10 Apr. 1956, PRO CAB 128-30).

[7] 'Comparison of Israeli and Jordanian Delinquencies', J. P. Tripp, 30 June 1954, PRO FO 371-111072 VR 1072/141; R. Stevenson (Cairo) to FO, 5 June 1955, PRO FO 371-115842 VR 1072/141.

[8] 'Action in the Event of Israeli Aggression', 22 Apr. 1955, and appended 'Annex', PRO FO 371-115840; 'Israel-Arab Dispute. Measures Against Aggression', E. M. Rose, 15 June 1955, PRO FO 371-115844 VR 1072/177; 'Gaza Situation and Implications for the Anglo-Jordan Treaty', Levant Department, FO, 16 June 1955, PRO FO 371-115902 VR 1092/174; 'Action in the Event of Israeli Aggression', Rose, 9 July 1955, PRO FO 371-115833 VR 1071/ 100.

[9] H. O. Hooper, Board of Trade, to A. D. Wilson, FO, 28 Apr. 1955; A. K. Potter, Treasury Chambers, to J. E. Galsworthy, FO, 2 May 1955; 'Economic Sanctions Which might be Applied Against Israel', FO draft minute, unsigned and undated, all in PRO FO 371-115840; 'Israel-Arab Dispute', Rose, PRO FO 371-115844 VR 1072/177; R. W. Bailey (Washington) to Rose, 10 Aug. 1955, PRO FO 371-115846 VR 1072/238.

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integrity and regime remained fairly firm through the early and mid-1950s (culminating in the dispatch of British paratroops to Amman in July 1958). This commitment was strained to its limits in 1956. But it held. As it had weathered `Abdullah's assassination in 1951, so it weathered King Hussein's ouster of Glubb and his fellow British officers in the Arab Legion in March 1956.

A certain narrowness of interpretation helped. Throughout, and often to Jordan's anger, Britain distinguished between Israeli 'raids' and a full-scale invasion, flatly refusing to intervene in response to 'raids'. Britain regarded intervention as reasonable only in the event of a full-scale invasion of Jordanian territory, while acknowledging that, in practice, such intervention would probably be ineffective in saving the Legion from defeat and (West) Jordan from conquest.[10] The danger of Anglo-Israeli confrontation over Jordan seemingly peaked in September-early October 1956, only weeks before Britain and Israel went to war together against Egypt. A series of IDF raids had left more than a hundred Jordanians dead and the Legion battered. Britain, somewhat embarrassingly, had to go to bat for Jordan at the UN Security Council—while busy putting the finishing touches to the Anglo-French-Israeli plan of attack against Egypt.[11]

British (and American) support of the Arabs and condemnation of Israel in Security Council debates after Israeli reprisal raids were constant features of the 1950s. In Arab eyes, of course, nothing could erase the Anglo-American patronage of the Zionist enterprise. Therefore, to compensate, and in the hope of retaining Arab goodwill and protecting vital Middle East interests, Britain and the United States had to try extra hard at the United Nations.[12]

As well, there were also sincere anti-Israeli officials in the State Department and Foreign Office. And there were the West's diplomatic representatives in the Arab capitals, who constituted a semi-permanent lobby proffering anti-Israeli advice. Frequently, these diplomats (and their Arab hosts) pressed Washington and London to impose sanctions against Israel,[13] routinely triggering counter-pressure from Western representatives in Tel Aviv, who argued that (*a*) the Arabs were also responsible for the state of Arab-Israeli relations and border clashes, (*b*) Western

[10] FO to British Legation, Amman, 14 Oct. 1956, PRO PREM 11/1454.

[11] Eden to Lloyd, 20 Oct. 1956, PRO PREM 11/1454; Lloyd to Eden, *c*. 22 Oct. 1956, FO 371-121746.

[12] After Qibya, the British minister in Damascus, Gardener, reported: 'The degree of our support for the Arab case in the Security Council will be taken as evidence of the strength of our desire for Arab friendship . . . . Unless we adopt a stronger line with Israel . . . we shall . . . be faced with deterioration in Anglo-Syrian relations' (Gardener to FO, 4 Nov. 1953, PRO FO 371-104759 ER 107985).

[13] C. B. Duke (Amman) to Shuckburgh, FO, 10 Aug. 1954, PRO FO 371-111073 VR 1072/175.

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sanctions against Israel would only reinforce Arab 'rejectionism', and (*c*) sanctions might push a desperate Israel towards 'aggressive war against her neighbours'.[14]

One of the main objectives of American and British policy in the early and mid-1950s was to contain border skirmishing and prevent war. To this end, they tried to curb a regional arms race, which, as 1914 was believed to have demonstrated, was a surefire recipe for war. Washington and London believed that a military 'balance' existed, and must be preserved, between Israel and its neighbours.[15] They therefore set and adhered to a policy of keeping that balance,[16] at the same time using arms sales as carrots and sticks with which to control their Middle Eastern allies and protégés.

Throughout the 1952-6 period, especially during Sharett's premiership, British and American officials took the Activist-Moderate split in the Israeli Cabinet into account, supporting Sharett's declared policy of restraint. Western diplomats in Tel Aviv constantly urged their superiors to act to help the Moderates: leaning too heavily on Israel, by one-sided condemnations, threats of sanctions, or denials of arms, tended to help the Activists, it was argued. Israeli restraint had to be rewarded, with words and gestures of encouragement, Arab concessions, and Western security guarantees and arms.[17]

The Western Powers and Nasser

While London and Washington had little sympathy by 1952 for Egypt's monarchist regime, the Free Officers' putsch, which had not caught their

[14] F. E. Evans (Tel Aviv) to Shuckburgh, FO, 31 Aug. 1954, PRO FO 371-111074. The US and British ambassadors in Tel Aviv during the early and mid-1950s continuously emphasized Israel's 'strong sense of isolation' and 'deep sense of insecurity' as factors that must be taken into account in Washington and London. Driven into a corner, Israel might take 'a bash at the Arabs', even if it meant 'national suicide' (minute by A. Nutting, 15 Apr. 1955, PRO FO 371-115899; J. Nicholls to Eden, 8 Feb. 1955, PRO FO 371-115837).

[15] Cabinet memo. by Eden, 23 Nov. 1954, PRO CAB 129-72. Western officials did not really believe that there was an arms balance between Israel and the combined Arab states. It was understood that the Arab states had more. But Israel was seen as enjoying countervailing 'advantages of a single command, interior lines of communication and superior technical skill' ('Brief for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting', unsigned and undated (but probably from Jan. 1955), PRO FO 371-115837).

[16] Minute by Shuckburgh, 16 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115830 VR 1071/33.

[17] Nicholls (Tel Aviv) to FO, 4 Nov. 1954, PRO FO 371o11106 VR 1091/245; Nicholls to Eden, 8 Feb. 1955, PRO FO 371-115837; British Embassy (Tel Aviv) to Levant Department, FO, 14 Feb. 1955, PRO FO 371-115837; Nicholls to Shuckburgh, 24 May 1955, PRO FO 371-1158542. In summer 1955 Nicholls wrote to Shuckburgh: 'I have been racking my brains to think of some way in which we can strengthen Sharett's hand.' He suggested speaking 'sternly' to Nasser to end mining attacks along the Gaza border. Otherwise, 'the moderates here will be left in an untenable position' (Nicholls to Shuckburgh, FO, 7 June 1955, PRO FO 371-115844 VR 1072/181).

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intelligence services and diplomatic legations unawares,[18] left them somewhat apprehensive. In a world threatened by Communism, the toppling of old orders and the assumption of power by young officers were precarious developments. And, indeed, within months of the July *coup d'état*, Britain had emerged as the new regime's principal *bête noir*, and British withdrawal from the Canal Zone and the removal of imperialist influence from the region as a whole became the regime's chief foreign-policy goals—as they were to remain until the Anglo-French withdrawal in the wake of the failed Suez invasion of November 1956.

In February 1953, Cairo and London reached agreement over Sudan, guaranteeing that country independence of both Egypt and Britain in 1956. That out of the way, talks about British withdrawal from the Canal began in April 1954. A draft agreement was initialled on 27 July 1954 and the final agreement was signed on 19 October. The accord provided for complete British evacuation within twenty months. But, given Egyptian nationalist views about 'perfidious Albion' (subsequently 'confirmed' by British behaviour in October-November 1956), it is likely that many Egyptians continued to doubt whether London would honour its signature and actually evacuate the Zone as and when prescribed. The Egyptian leadership may well have feared that a major clash with Israel could provide Britain with the pretext it needed to stay.

Hence, the problem of the British military presence did not disappear with the conclusion of the agreement in 1954. Indeed, it continued to preoccupy the Egyptian leadership up to summer 1956. And the Egyptian military—from whose ranks most of the RCC had sprung—continued to regard that British presence along the Canal as a major strategic impediment in any prospective clash with Israel. An Egyptian army fighting the Israelis along the Gaza/Sinai-Negev border would have a potentially dangerous British army at its rear, astride vital supply lines.[19]

Britain's agreement in 1954 to withdraw from the Canal Zone (by June 1956) forced the West to think seriously about an alternative way to assure its presence and dominance in the region, and to bar Soviet encroachment, and it opened the way to a Western effort to initiate an Arab-Israeli peace settlement, which was seen as a precondition to maintaining Western influence and keeping the Soviets out.

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[18] M. Copeland, *The Game of Nations: The Amorality of Power Politics* (New York, 1969), 57-72.

[19] An echo of this Egyptian fear that Britain might exploit Egyptian-Israeli hostilities along the border to strike at Egypt along the Canal or in Cairo is to be found in Y. Bandman, 'Hatzi-Ha`i Sinai BaTefisa HaIstrategit shel Mitzrayim, 1949-1967', in G. Gwirtzman, A. Shmueli, *et al*. (eds.), *Sinai*, 959 nn. 14, 23.

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The Baghdad Pact

The stillborn idea of a 'Middle East Command' was resurrected in the mid-1950s as the 'Northern Tier' concept, otherwise known as the Baghdad Pact. The pact, aligning Britain with Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and Iraq, in an anti-Soviet defence bloc, was preceded by a number of bilateral mutual defence and arms-assistance accords—between Turkey and Pakistan in April 1954, and between the United States, Turkey, Iraq, and Pakistan in April-May 1954. In late 1954-early 1955, Britain—in co-ordination with Washington—tried to mesh these agreements in a multilateral defence treaty of 'mutual co-operation', the Baghdad Pact. On 12 January 1955, Iraq and Turkey announced their impending alliance and on 24 February signed a mutual defence treaty, the core of the Pact. Britain, Iran, and Pakistan joined in the following weeks. The pact's architects hoped that, underwritten by British (and, to a lesser extent, American) military commitments, it would deter Soviet aggression and subversion.

From the first, the pact's Western promoters had hoped to sign on a second tier of Arab states, principally Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. Iraq, it was felt, would remain an isolated and weak link in the chain so long as other Arab states did not join. But Nasser, ideologically committed to 'anti-imperialism' and 'non-alignment', objected. Having just formalized the eviction of Britain from the Canal, he was not about to let the 'imperialists' back in through the back door. In part, Nasser's opposition probably sprang from his ambition to lead the Arab world, and the Moslem and Third worlds,[20] and to counter Iraq's rise to prominence. From Nasser's perspective, the pact—which linked Arab states (Iraq) to non-Arab and Western states—was an effort to direct Arab military energies against an illusory enemy, the Soviet Union, while diverting attention from the real 'danger', Israel, and undermining the possibility of Arab unity, guided and led from Cairo. As one British memorandum put Nasser's—and general Arab—feelings at the time: 'Russia seems far away and the Palestine grievance fills their horizon.'[21]

Egypt, emerging as the leading Arab opponent of the Pact, unleashed a relentless campaign of propaganda and subversion against Iraq and potential pact members, principally Jordan. Amman emerged as the focus of Western efforts to bolster the pact and of Egyptian efforts to undermine it. The new Hashemite monarch, `Abdullah's grandson, Hussein, was

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[20] G. A. Nasser, *HaPhilosophia shel HaMahapecha* (in Hebrew; The philosophy of the revolution) (Tel Aviv, 1961) 39.

[21] 'Brief for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting', PRO FO 371-115837; Nasser, 'Response by Nasser to King Hussein's Message', 13 Mar. 1961, appended to *HaPhilosophia*; Dessouki, 'Nasser and the Struggle for Independence', in Louis and Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956*, 35-6.

deeply averse to Communism,[22] and he readily recognized the economic and military advantages of joining the pact. In December 1955 Britain sent its army commander, General Templer, to persuade Hussein to join. Nasser countered by orchestrating mass doting in Amman, with both the pact and the monarchy the butts of denunciation. Hussein's reliance on British subsidies and officers was highlighted. Nasser emerged as the standard-bearer of Araby and the regional bane of imperialism. Hussein's regime tottered. Only forceful intervention by the Legion and a ten-day curfew broke the back of the demonstrations.[23]

The rioting, in a belated repercussion, resulted in the March 1956 ouster by Hussein of Glubb and other senior British officers of the Arab Legion. They were replaced by Arabs. The move was probably in part a genuine reaction by the independence-minded monarch to what he saw as British manipulation, and in part a response to (and acquiescence in) Arab nationalist and Nasserist demands. Henceforward, the Legion became an 'Arab' army, and Jordan a 'more Arab' state.[24]

Israel greeted the Baghdad Pact with almost as little enthusiasm as Egypt. For, though it was directed against the Soviets, Israel saw it as potentially detrimental to its own well-being. Israel was not invited to join. And the pact-joining Arab states could expect major Western military and financial aid, which increased the military threat to Israel. As Jerusalem saw it, the West would be bound to support its allies, the pact members, in any quarrel between the Arabs and Israel.

But the pact withered on the vine. Egyptian opposition and subversion and internal nationalist or pan-Arab agitation deterred other countries from joining. Following the (1958) revolution that toppled Baghdad's Hashemite monarchy, Iraq formally withdrew in 1959. The battered pact was renamed CENTO (Central Treaty Organization) and henceforward focused on economic and social issues.

Nevertheless, Western efforts to rope the Arab World into the pact were to have a swift and dramatic impact. They were among the factors that alienated the revolutionary Egyptian regime and set Egypt on a collision course with Britain and France. Nasser's efforts to subvert the pact and the pro-Western Arab governments (Jordan and Iraq), and his drift

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[22] King Hussein of Jordan, *Uneasy Lies the Head* (United States, 1962) 114.

[23] Hussein (ibid. 106-13), maintains that Nasser at first gave his blessing to Jordan joining the pact—but then about-faced and tried to topple him.

[24] Dayan, lecturing IDF Staff and Command College officers, more or less predicted in Jan. 1956, after the Templer riots, that Hussein would remove the Legion's British officers ('Lecture by the CGS—Facts for Assessing the Situation in 1956', Dayan, 15 Jan. 1956). For Hussein's explanation of the dismissal of Glubb, a loyal servant of the Hashemite crown if ever there was one, see Hussein, *Uneasy*, 129-50. Hussein (*a*) charged Glubb with 'loyalty to Britain', (*b*) felt that the Legion's officer corps should be Arabized, and (*c*) wanted to change the Legion's strategy so that it would defend every inch of the West Bank.

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towards the Soviet camp, embodied in the Czech arms deal, heightened the antagonisms that led to the Anglo-American decision not to fund the Aswan High Dam development project, and to the Egyptian rejoinder, the nationalization of the Suez Canal in July 1956. These, in turn, led to the Anglo-French-Israeli assault on Egypt in October-November.

Israel and Nasser, July 1952-1954

The deterioration in Anglo-Egyptian relations slightly preceded and then paralleled the deterioration in Israeli-Egyptian relations. The two processes converged in the joint expedition against Egypt in October-November 1956.

The July 1952 assumption of power by Nasser and the Free Officers was greeted with optimism in Jerusalem. After the failure of the 1949-51 negotiations with Jordan and Syria, Israeli hopes for a breakthrough towards peace had come to hinge on a change of regime in this or that Arab country. Egypt, the largest Arab state, and the seat of the Arab League, was always understood to be the key. The Farouq regime had been identified with 1948 and a desire for revenge and, at the same time, with a fundamental weakness that made it constitutionally incapable of taking the risky road to peace. The young Free Officers, preaching, it seemed, modernity and progress, and perhaps even socialism, might yet proceed where their elders (and enemies) had feared to tread. Curiously, the ever-suspicious Ben-Gurion seems to have been the most enthusiastic of Israel's leaders about the possibilities of making peace with the new regime. In August 1952 he publicly welcomed Farouq's deposition and extended an offer of peace, stressing that there were no natural conflicts of interest between Israel and Egypt. Simultaneously, secret contacts were initiated with Egyptian diplomats in Paris with the aim of launching peace negotiations.[25] In September an internal Israel Foreign Ministry circular stated:

> We do not regard Neguib's [i.e. the RCC] regime as hostile . . . . Farouq's overthrow has removed from the arena one of the main bearers of the drive for revenge against Israel . . . . One should not assume that the new regime . . . is headed for a renewal of the aggression against Israel by [launching] a Second Round.[26]

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[25] *Divrei HaKnesset*, 12/2, (18, 19 Aug. 1952), 2985-6, 3019-20; 'Talks and Contacts for the Clarification of the Possibility of [Reaching] a Settlement Between Israel and Egypt, 1949-55', P. Eliav, undated but with covering note Rafael to Sharett, 18 Jan. 1956, ISA FM 2454/2; M. Oren, 'Secret Israel-Egypt Peace Initiatives Prior to the Suez Campaign', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 26/3 (July 1990), 353.

[26] Quoted in Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 421 n. 31.

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The new regime, for its part, focused its attention on consolidating power, removing the vestiges of the *ancien régime*, and reforming Egypt. During its first two years in power, the RCC showed little interest in Israel and the Palestine problem. Almost immediately there was a certain easing of tension along the Gaza border and increased co-operation in the EIMAC.[27] But repeated Israeli feelers were either ignored or politely rebuffed. The new Egyptian leadership apparently felt that it had enough on its plate without taking on the embarrassment and risks of a negotiation with Israel.[28]

Egypt preferred to maintain the 'no war, no peace' status quo—and, in early 1953, secretly informed Israel that this was, and would remain, its policy. But within months there were sporadic secret contacts.[29] Egypt sounded Israel out about possible economic assistance ('purchasing [Egyptian] cotton') and help in facilitating British withdrawal from the Canal, holding out the hope of eventually establishing a 'relationship of co-operation' with Jerusalem.[30]

Nothing came of the contacts. Meanwhile, during the months leading up to the Anglo-Egyptian withdrawal agreement, Egypt tried to maintain quiet along the Gaza Strip border, and acted—occasionally with vigour—to curb infiltration. Hundreds of Palestinians were rounded up and troublesome Palestinian troops were removed from front-line positions.[31]

A certain ambivalence characterized Nasser's attitude towards Israel up to 1955. He certainly regarded Israel as an unwelcome, alien presence in the region, but respected its strength,[32] and probably feared its future

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[27] Evans to A. D. M. Ross, FO, 22 Sept. 1952, PRO FO 371-98475 E1072/45.

[28] Oren, 'Secret Israel-Egypt Peace Initiatives Prior to the Suez Campaign', 353.

[29] An Egyptian envoy, `Abd al Rahman Sadiq, informed the Israelis that there were two views in the RCC. One, advocated by Nasser and the Egyptian army commander, General `Abd ul Hakim `Amr, supported 'rapid and concrete movement towards a settlement with Israel' and favoured a variety of ameliorating measures. The second, advocated by Salah Salem, Gamal Salem, and Anwar Sadat, held that Egypt should not 'take steps' towards a settlement ('Talks and Contacts', Eliav, ISA FM 2454/2).

[30] Shiloah to Sharett, 13 May 1953; Ben-Gurion to Sharett, 17 May 1953; Shiloah to Shmuel Divon, 24 May 1953, all in ISA Shiloah Papers 4373/15. Israel informed Egypt of its immediate readiness to purchase $1 million worth of cotton. The Egyptians stalled, and eventually Nasser informed Israel that the idea of commercial transactions was premature. But he again asked Jerusalem for help in persuading American public opinion to support Egypt's demand for British withdrawal. Ben-Gurion was sceptical and demanded that Egypt agree to the free passage of Israeli and Israel-bound shipping through the Canal if Israel was to help Egypt in Washington.

[31] Maj. A. Rabkin to DMI, 16 Sept. 1954, ISA FM 2438/6; J. Caffrey (Cairo) to State Dept., 3 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 1. See also Bandman, 'Hatzi-Ha`i Sinai BaTefisa HaIstrategit shel Mitzrayim, 1949-1967', 958 n. 9. But local military authorities in Gaza, including the military intelligence office, occasionally dispatched infiltrators into Israel, usually on intelligence-gathering missions or on revenge raids; and Palestinian units of the Egyptian army stationed on the line, occasionally attacked Israelis (Y. Tsur to Eytan, 7 May 1954, ISA FM 2401/16).

[32] Nasser repeatedly referred to his 1948-9 experiences in the 'Faluja Pocket' in his *The Philosophy of the Revolution* (Egypt, 1954).

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intentions. But there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of his assessment, published in January 1955:

> Israel's policy is aggressive and expansionist . . . However, we do not want to start any conflict. War has no place in the constructive policy which we have designed to improve the lot of our people. We have much to do in Egypt A war would cause us to lose . . . much of what we seek to achieve.[33]

'It would be utter madness for Egypt to start a war with Israel on her own' and it would be 'imbecility' to rely on the co-operation of the other Arab states, Nasser told Stevenson, the British ambassador in Cairo, that month.[34]

Before March 1955 Egypt generally sought tranquillity along its borders with Israel, the more freely to pursue its goals of banishing the British, gaining ascendancy in the Arab world, and developing its political, economic, and social structures. It was 'far less concerned over the Palestine question' than any of the other Arab states, reported the American ambassador in Cairo, Jefferson Caffery, at the end of 1954.[35]

In his programmatic-philosophical work, *The Philosophy of the Revolution*, written, apparently, in late 1953, Nasser carefully avoided calling for Israel's destruction and did not set it as a goal of Egyptian policy. He spoke only vaguely of the 'common [Arab] struggle' and described Israel as a 'fruit of imperialism' and Palestine as 'a home stolen illegally from its owners'.[36] But Israel's—and especially, Ben-Gurion's—attitude towards

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[33] Nasser, 'The Egyptian Revolution', *Foreign Affairs*, 33/2 (Jan. 1955), quoted in A. E. Hillal Dessouki, 'Nasser and the Struggle for Independence', in Louis and Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956*, 35.

[34] Stevenson to FO, 6 Jan. 1955, PRO FO 371-115837 V1072/2.

[35] Caffery to State Dept., 11 Dec. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5,684a.86. The eminent historian P. J. Vatikiotis has written that nowhere in Nasser's *Philosophy of the Revolution* or in his memoirs of the Palestine war is there an 'unequivocal statement of his feelings' towards Israel (Vatikiotis, *Nasser and his Generation*, (New York, 1978) 249-51). Vatikiotis is not completely clear about whether Nasser between 1948 and 1954 regarded Israel with a measure of neutrality (p. 249) or as an imperialist cat's paw (pp. 250-1).

[36] Nasser, *HaPhilosophia*, 47, 44, and 40. Israeli politicians, journalists, and chroniclers frequently asserted, during the 1950s and in later years, that Nasser had publicly called for Israel's destruction in the early and mid-1950s, specifically in The *Philosophy of the Revolution* (see, e.g., Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 18-19, and Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 36-7). Ben-Gurion likened Nasser's *Philosophy* to Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (untitled memo. by Ben-Gurion, 10 Nov. 1956, BGA). So, indeed, did Eden (A. Eden, *Full Circle* (London, 1960) 608). But, in fact, Nasser espoused Israel's destruction, as policy, explicitly, and in public, only *after* the Sinai-Suez War (see, e.g., 'Nasser's Answer to King Hussein of Jordan's Message', 13 Mar. 1961, appended to *HaPhilosophia*, 58, where Nasser stated: 'On Israel: We believe that the evil introduced into the heart of the Arab world must be uprooted and that the rights stolen from the Arabs must return to their owners'; and Y. Harkabi, *Arab Attitudes to Israel* (Jerusalem, 1976), 7, 8, 27, 35, etc.; Harkabi offers no examples of Nasser calling, implicitly or explicitly, for Israel's destruction *before 1958*).
But the switch in Egyptian attitudes—and references—to Israel can already be detected after the Gaza Raid of February 1955. Nasser, for a time, may have held his tongue. But other Egyptian spokesmen and Egyptian organs of state increasingly advocated Israel's destruction. According to Ben-Gurion, Cairo Radio on 4 June 1955 declared: 'Egypt has

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Egypt soured in the course of 1954 and January 1955. A major factor was the increasing violence, occasionally by Egyptian army-directed squads, along the Gaza frontier. Continuing Egyptian political and propaganda warfare against Israel also played a role. And so, somewhat paradoxically, did the *Bat-Galim* and Lavon affairs. But perhaps the single clinching, traumatic event that soured attitudes towards Cairo among Israeli policy-makers was the hanging of the two Jewish saboteurs in Cairo in January 1955. The hangings led almost directly to the IDF raid on Gaza in February 1955, which, in turn, led directly to both the Egyptian Fedayeen campaigns and the Egyptian Soviet arms deal (for this series of events, see Chapters 10 and 11, below).

The Czech Arms Deal, 1955

Having succeeded in 1954 in persuading Britain to agree to withdraw from the Canal, Nasser during the following two years launched a series of *coups* which were to lead directly to the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of October-November 1956. The theatrical, historic gambles included Egypt's signing of a major arms deal (the Czech deal) with the Soviet Bloc (mid-1955); its unleashing of the Fedayeen campaigns against Israel (starting August 1955); the attempt to topple King Hussein (winter 1955/6); the approach to the Soviet Union to fund the Aswan High Dam development project (1956); and the nationalization of the Suez Canal (July 1956).

Nasser's enigmatic character emerged as a major factor in Middle Eastern politics. Shuckburgh was being generous and diplomatic when he wrote: 'There is an element of incaution, amounting almost to levity, in this serious and high-minded young man.'[37] Nasser was 'not afraid to take chances and . . . daring steps', according to Dayan.[38]

The first major surprise he sprang was the so-called 'Czech' arms deal, which provided for a massive supply of arms by the Soviet Union to Egypt in exchange for Egyptian cotton. The deal, apparently signed on 20 May 1955,[39] with the first deliveries reportedly reaching Egypt in July, was the result of Soviet efforts, begun in 1953, to establish links, if not an alliance, with the leading Arab state. Henceforward, East and West would vie for

(Footnote continued from previous page)

mobilized a strong army . . . to get Palestine back and to uproot criminal Zionism. In the Second Round the Arabs will be able to avenge their honour, get back their country, and cleanse Palestine' (quoted in Drori, 'Mediniyut HaGmul', 36). An internal order of the day by the commander of the Egyptian army's 3rd Division, issued on 15 Feb. 1956, sets out Israel's 'annihilation' as Egypt's goal (Harkabi, *Arab Attitudes*, 38).

[37] Nicholls to Shuckburgh, FO, 7 June 1955, PRO FO 371-115844 VR1072/181; Shuckburgh to Nicholls, 29 June 1955, PRO FO 371-115844.

[38] 'Lecture by the CGS—Facts for Assessing the Situation in 1956', Dayan, 15 Jan. 1956.

[39] A. Hewedy, 'Nasser and the Crisis of 1956', in Louis and Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956*, 162.

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dominance in the region. The Czech deal, as one Israeli official put it, 'had turned Israeli-Arab relations into a central global concern'.[40] Seen from Moscow and Cairo, the Czech deal was an apt riposte to the Baghdad Pact.

The smarting defeat of Egyptian arms in IDF retaliatory raids in 1954-early 1955, culminating in the Gaza Raid of 28 February 1955 (see Chapter 11); Egypt's bitterness towards and struggle against Britain over the Canal Zone; Nasser's drive for leadership in the Arab, Muslim, and Non-Aligned worlds; and the Western linkage of arms supplies to Egyptian membership in an anti-Communist alliance and to payment in hard currency (which Egypt lacked)—all contributed to Nasser's dramatic decision to turn Eastwards for arms, resulting in the Czech deal, announced by Nasser on 27 September 1955 (at the opening of an Egyptian army photographic exhibition).[41] Nasser, who at the Bandung Conference in April 1955 had

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[40] 'Report on the Activity of the Office of the [Foreign Minister's] Middle East Affairs Adviser during July-Dec. 1955', G. Rafael, undated, ISA FM 2445/6.

[41] In mid-Sept. the Americans at long last attempted to dissuade Nasser from going through with the deal and offered Egypt a small amount of military equipment—but, again, for hard currency. Unpersuaded, Nasser went ahead with the Czech deal (Copeland, *Game*, 156-66; Bar-On, 'Ha'Iska HaCzechit-Mitzrit: She'ela shel Ti`aruch', *Ma`arachot* (Jan. 1987), 42 n. 2).

Nasser's motives for signing the deal have been hotly debated since—but there can be no authoritative answer before the opening of the Soviet and Egyptian state archives, and perhaps not even then. Nasser subsequently always linked the deal to a specific event, the IDF's Gaza Raid; the Czech deal was Egypt's response to the raid, which had highlighted Egypt's weakness. A. Sadat (*In Search of Identity: An Autobiography* (London, 1978) 135) gave a similar explanation. So, at least initially, did Sharett (protocol of Mapai Political Committee meeting, 16 Oct. 1955, LPA 26/55).

But most Israeli politicians and writers have dismissed Nasser's explanation as propaganda, attributing the deal to the more general trend of Egyptian policy, which sought to win Egyptian leadership of the Arab, Muslim, and Third worlds, independence of the West, and closer ties to the Soviet Bloc. U. Ra`anan (*The USSR Arms the Third World: Case Studies in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1969), *passim*), maintains that Nasser's efforts to obtain Soviet arms preceded the Gaza Raid by some months, and that Nasser decided in principle to obtain Soviet arms in the wake of the signing of the Iraqi-Turkish Baghdad Pact (24 Feb. 1955) rather than the Gaza Raid, which took place four days later. Bar-On, apparently, has not quite made up his mind on this important point. In 'Ha`Iska', published in 1986, Bar-On asserted:

> it is difficult not to be impressed by the evidence, that the IDF raid [on Gaza] indeed caused great shock in Cairo, and pushed Nasser and his colleagues to change their order of priorities . . . perhaps also propelling them into seeking to arm their forces as quickly as possible. (p. 39)

But in *Sha`arei `Aza* (1992), Bar-On offered a contrary view. He wrote:

> There are those who argue that the change in Nasser's policy, and especially his approach to the Soviet Bloc to obtain arms, occurred in essence in the wake of [the Gaza Raid] . . . . But it is doubtful whether this argument has any basis. The increase of hostile Egyptian actions against Israel occurred a long time before the raid . . . (p. 35)

And he added:

> In retrospect . . . it is clear today that the Czech deal, more than being directed against

(Footnote continued on next page)

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emerged as a leading figure in the emergent Non-Aligned Bloc, had decided both to assert his independence of the Arab world's traditional overseers and to play one global bloc against the other.[42] Perhaps he had hoped that word of the impending deal with Moscow, before it was implemented, would induce Britain and the United States quickly to supply him with the sophisticated arms he coveted in the quantities and on the terms he desired. Until that point, the Arab states had been armed exclusively by Britain, the United States, and France.

Britain and the United States first heard of Egypt's efforts to get East Bloc arms on 9-10 June 1955.[43] Initially, neither London nor Washington

(Footnote continued from previous page)

Israel, was a response to intra-Arab problems, and originated in Nasser's fierce opposition to the Baghdad Pact and to tying himself to the Western defence systems. (p. 39)

Bar-On implies that there was an increase in hostile acts by Egypt against Israel in the second half of 1954 and in early 1955, following the successful conclusion of Cairo's struggle to compel Britain to withdraw from the Canal Zone. Vatikiotis (*Nasser and his Generation*, 252-3) says the same thing. But the evidence does not confirm this. While there was a limited increase in hostile Egyptian operations during the spring (*before* the conclusion of the Anglo-Egypt agreement), summer, and autumn of 1954, there was definitely a *waning* of such actions during the months Oct. 1954-Feb. 1955. Those months, following the Anglo-Egyptian signing, according to Bar-On and Vatikiotis, should have seen an *upsurge* of Egyptian attacks along the border had there been a radical change in Egyptian policy. But they did not (see Ch. 10 n. 184 for details about the actual sharp decline in incidents along the Egyptian-Israeli border during Oct. 1954-Feb. 1955). And the previous attacks, of Apr. and July-Sept. 1954, appear to have been of a local character, and certainly lacked the dimensions and frequency indicative of a major, national-level policy change (unlike the attacks of Mar.-Aug. 1955). Both Tal ('HaTguvot', 101, 119-20), and J. Shimshoni (*Israel and Conventional Deterrence: Border Warfare from 1953 to 1970* (Ithaca, NY, 1988), 82), agree that the radical switch in Egyptian policy, from somewhat hostile indifference towards Israel, to active belligerence and confrontation, took place in the wake of and as a result of the Gaza Raid.

From the available evidence, it would appear that the Czech arms deal had several causes. By the end of 1954, Nasser was already well on the road towards disengagement from the West and was moving towards non-alignment. He was also beginning to take greater notice of the Israeli problem. These processes naturally propelled Egypt towards the Soviet camp. A string of events, in late 1954 and early 1955, which included the Israeli sabotage campaign (HaEssek HaBish) and the *Bat-Galim* affair, American and British refusals to provide economic and military aid, and the signing of the Baghdad Pact, accelerated the process. The Gaza Raid—the most important of these events—no doubt triggered the final, urgent Egyptian effort to obtain a massive supply of arms to offset the IDF's evident superiority. Nasser's military regime could not live with such a humiliation or in such an obvious military inferiority. This, incidentally, was, more or less, Dayan's view of the multiple causation of the Czech arms deal ('Lecture by the CGS—-Facts for Assessing the Situation in 1956', Dayan, 15 Jan. 1956). Nasser, at least initially, had tried to attribute the decision for the Czech deal to his colleagues in the RCC. He claimed to have opposed the deal but to have been overruled by the RCC ('Memorandum of Conversation' (J. F. Dulles, George Allen, Fraser Wilkins and Ahmed Hussein, Egypt's ambassador in Washington), 17 Oct. 1955, NA RG 59, 611.74/10-1755, Box 2546), but this seems an unlikely tale.

[42] 'The Arabs find it difficult to resist the temptation of playing one master off against another' (Glubb to R. H. Turton (FO), 8 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115848 VR1072/279B).

[43] Kyle, *Suez*, 72; Stevenson to FO, 10 June 1955, PRO FO 371-115843 VR1072/158; FO to British Embassy, Washington, 11 June 1950, PRO FO 371-115844. Heikal (*Cutting the Lion's Tail*, 72) says that Nasser had already put out feelers to the Soviet Union about arms purchases via Chinese Foreign Minister Chou en Lai in May, and mistakenly writes that Nasser informed the United States and Britain on '1-3' June 1955 of the impending mission to Moscow.

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seems to have taken Nasser too seriously. Perhaps they believed that the deal would not materialize—though Egyptian army officers were already boasting of the imminent arrival of the weaponry.[44] A last effort by Nasser, in July, to obtain American arms also ended in failure. 'The Egyptian military could not continue in a position obviously inferior to Israel. If Egypt was unable to obtain arms from her friends, she would be obliged to turn to others,' the Egyptian ambassador in Washington, Ahmed Hussein, warned the Americans. Washington remained unmoved.[45]

Israel, for its part, failed to foresee or understand where Nasser was headed. IDF intelligence had completely failed to forecast that, in the wake of the' Gaza Raid, Egypt would turn Eastwards, specifically for arms.[46] As late as the end of August, weeks after officials in Washington and London knew about the Egyptian mission to Moscow, Sharett noted sceptically 'some rumour' concerning a 'Russian . . . offer of arms and economic aid' to Egypt.[47]

But with media reports in late August and early September of the impending deal and then with reports from Cairo during 19-21 September that the deal had been concluded, Washington, London, and Jerusalem sat up sharply. All quickly understood that a pivotal, indeed, revolutionary event had taken place. It would lead, wrote one senior US official, to an intensification of the Israeli-Arab conflict; it was 'a very serious step toward the penetration of the Western position in the Arab world'; it posed 'a grave threat to the ultimate security of the Suez Canal'; and it would, in domino-fashion, lead to 'similar penetration [by Russia] of other Arab states'.[48] Glubb felt that it would considerably enhance Nasser's standing and Egypt's position in the Arab world, and ultimately threaten Jordan's security, as Israel would acquire arms to offset the Czech deal, and these eventually would be turned against Jordan.[49]

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[44] British Embassy, Amman, to Levant Dept., FO, 15 June 1955, PRO FO 371-115902 VR1092/183.

[45] 'Memorandum of Conversation' (Hussein, Allen, Wilkins, and Burdett), 21 July 1955, NA RG 59, 611.74/7-2155, Box 2546.

[46] 'Special Report: The Gaza Incident—Summary and Assessment of the Situation', IDF Intelligence Branch, 22 Mar. 1955, ISA FM 2454/5.

[47] Sharett, *Yornan Ishi*, iv. 1147, entry for 24 Aug. 1955.

[48] Kyle, *Suez*, 72-5; Russell to SecState, 22 Sept. 1955, NA RG 59, 684a.86/9-2255, Box 2692.

[49] 'An (Extremely Conjectural) Memo on Egyptian Policy', G. Glubb, 22 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115907; 'Need for Increases to Arab Legion as a Result of Russian Penetration into Egypt', Arab Legion HQ, 30 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115682. But Glubb's views were not representative of the majority reaction in Jordan, which took heart from the deal as a sign of Arab 'independence' and resurgent power. An American observer in Amman noted 'a dangerous quickening of the local political pulse . . . a renewed confidence in the ability of the Arabs to throw the Israelis into the sea' (Mallory to State Dept., 25 Oct. 1955, NA RG 59, 684a.86/10-2555, Box 2693). See also British Embassy (Amman) to Rose, 2 Aug. 1956, PRO FO 371-121468 VJ1015/235.

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The shock in London was extreme. Shuckburgh spoke of the need to 'abandon Israel'; Macmillan, of possibly halting the military withdrawal from the Canal Zone, lest the Canal fall into Soviet hands. Other British and American officials soon decided that Nasser might have to be got rid of.[50]

For Israel, the Czech deal was a watershed. Hitherto, the Israeli high command had been confident of the IDF's ability to beat any Arab army or any likely Arab coalition. The Czech deal changed everything. According to Israeli intelligence, the deal involved 100-200 MiG 15s, 40-75 medium bombers, 100-300 medium and heavy tanks, submarines, anti-aircraft guns, etc.—substantially more and, in some cases, better arms than the IDF possessed.[51]

Dayan believed it would take the Egyptian army six to eight months ('between January and August 1956') to absorb the weapons; IDF intelligence thought it would take substantially longer.[52] Dayan did not believe that the Egyptians had decided to go to war in 1956. But he and Ben-Gurion were certain that Nasser sought Israel's destruction and that he would launch a war when he felt ready and able to win it.[53] 'I assume they will attack [us] at the beginning of the summer [1956]. We must not suppose that they will not attack. Logic dictates that they may attack when they feel that they can win,' Ben-Gurion told Dayan in December 1955.[54] With the Czech deal, Israel had lost its deterrent power; the Egyptians no longer feared the IDF. The Egyptian chief of staff even spoke of Egyptian military 'superiority' once the new arms were absorbed.[55]

It was the Ilyushin bombers that seem to have given Ben-Gurion sleepless nights. Having spent months in London in 1940 during the Blitz, he feared the devastation the bombers could cause in Israel's population centres.

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[50] Kyle, *Suez*, 74-5.

[51] Various figures about the size of the deal exist. In Jan. 1956 the IDF General Staff received reports that the deal, much larger than it previously believed, consisted of '200 MiG 15 aircraft . . . 50 Ilyushin bombers . . . 275 T-34 tanks . . . [and] hundreds of artillery pieces' for a total value of $250 million (Dayan, *Avnei*, 176; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1209, entry for 13 Oct. 1955). Somewhat smaller numbers are given in Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 12-13, and Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 29-30 ('170 medium tanks T-34', '60 heavy Stalin tanks', '90-100 MiG 15s', '48 Ilyushin-28 jet bombers', etc.). By way of comparison, in autumn 1955 Israel possessed some 50 Meteor and Ouragan jet fighters, while Egypt had some 80 jet fighters (mainly Vampires). Egypt had some 170 and Israel some 100 obsolescent tanks. The Czech deal posed problems of quality as well as of quantity. The MiG-15 was a class above the Meteor and the Ouragan, as was the T-34 compared with the Sherman M-3 (Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 30-1). The first Czech deal MiGs appear to have reached Egypt at the end of July 1955.

[52] Kyle, *Suez*, 78-9; and 'Lecture by the CGS—Facts for Assessing the Situation in 1956', Dayan, 15 Jan. 1956. In mid-1956 American intelligence noted a rash of accidents involving MiGs and Ilyushins in Egypt, indicating Egyptian difficulties in absorbing and maintaining the sophisticated Soviet arms (Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 15 July 1956, BGA).

[53] 'Lecture by the CGS—Facts for Assessing the Situation in 1956', Dayan, 15 Jan. 1956; Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra, 15*.

[54] Quoted in Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 33.

[55] Ibid. 34.

'The real danger is of an air attack,' he told the American ambassador to Tel Aviv, Lawson, in January 1956. A month before, he had spoken of 'destruction . . . in the cities . . . A heavy price in blood, a lot of blood . . . The price will be greater and more terrible than we paid in 1948.'[56]

The Czech deal immediately raised the spectre of an Israeli pre-emptive war before Egypt absorbed the new weapons and became too strong. Dulles, on hearing of the Czech deal, had foreseen that this might be Israel's reaction;[57] so had the British.[58] Sharett, who was to remain foreign minister until June 1956, continued to oppose an Israeli-initiated 'Second Round', pre-emptive or otherwise. It would probably solve nothing and might result in severe, as yet unimagined problems. And it would undermine Israel's future ability to get arms from the West.[59]

But for a few weeks, the spirit of pre-emption held sway in Israel. There was something like a consensus for pre-emption in the press.[60] Even Eban (and his deputy, Reuven Shiloah), proposed that Israel attack Egypt (by the spring, after obtaining Western arms);[61] the anti-Activist General Zionist Party, at the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee meeting of 30 November 1955, even proposed an Israeli conquest of the West Bank.[62]

Ben-Gurion's first recorded reaction to the Czech arms deal, delivered at the Cabinet meeting of 3 October, was: 'If they really get MiGs—I will be for bombing them!'[63] He spoke of long-term plans to conquer the Straits of Tiran and/or the Gaza Strip.[64] The director of the Mossad, Isser

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[56] Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 21; Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 56-7. Dayan also mentioned the Blitz in connection with the new Egyptian weaponry ('Lecture by the CGS—Facts for Assessing the Situation in 1956', Dayan, 15 Jan. 1956). Israel's projected expenditure on anti- aircraft defences in 1956/7 was six times that spent in 1954/5, according to Dayan. In fact, Israel suffered altogether just under 200 dead in the Sinai Campaign, and Egyptian aircraft never bombed Israel's cities or airfields.

[57] Kyle, *Suez*, 74.

[58] Nicholls to Macmillan, 10 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115905 VR1092/329.

[59] Protocols of Mapai Political Committee meetings, 27-8 Dec. 1955, LPA 26/55. Sharett had long opposed an Israeli-initiated Second Round. He feared Western intervention, as had occurred in Korea (Sharett at Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 13 Apr. 1954, CZA S100-92).

[60] Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 18-20.

[61] Unsigned memo. dated 11 Oct. 1955, ISA FM 2456/3. The file also contains an unsigned memo. dated 9 Oct. 1955 proposing a pre-emptive war 'between now and spring 1956'. Bar-On (*Sha`arei `Aza*, 16-7, 414 n. 20) says that the memo. was 'signed by Abba Eban' and was composed by Eban, Shiloah, and Col. K. Shalmon, the Israeli military attaché in Washington. Bar-On does not date the memo. See also Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1207-8, entry for 12 Oct. 1955. Sharett rebuked Eban and Shiloah for sending the memo., saying that it would 'light a fire in the army' which was already motivated by 'an urge for pre-emptive war' (Sharett to Shiloah and Eban, 12 Oct. 1955, ISA FM 2456/3).

[62] Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 37.

[63] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1185, entry for 3 Oct. 1955.

[64] Ibid. iv. 1191, 1193, entries for 5 Oct. 1955.

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Harel, proposed conquering the Gaza Strip, to topple Nasser;[65] the DMI, Colonel Harkabi, tabled a similar proposal;[66] and the army high command agreed.[67] Harel had argued that the Egyptian junta wanted to destroy Israel and that Israel had to destroy the Egyptian army before it absorbed the new Soviet weaponry.[68]

Without doubt it was Dayan who was the most powerful and ardent advocate of pre-emption. Israel's military superiority would diminish from month to month, the CGS argued.[69] His immediate reaction to the Czech deal was apparently to propose a quick, massive assault on the Egyptian army and conquest of the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula. But Ben-Gurion, mindful of Western susceptibilities, the state of Israeli armaments, and internal coalition restraints, was hesitant. He preferred a subtler approach. 'The confrontation must be initiated through [gradual] escalation [*hitdarderut* or *dirdur*],' Dayan—who had just seen Ben-Gurion—told his deputy and Harkabi on 23 October.[70]

Israel could not launch an unprovoked all-out assault on the Egyptian army. It would be branded the aggressor and lose Western support: who would then resupply Israel for a Third Round? Rather, responding to real Egyptian violations of the armistice accords, Israel must launch powerful retaliatory strikes, including an assault on the Straits of Tiran (Sharm ash Sheikh), where the Egyptians were blockading shipping to Eilat. The attacks would trigger Egyptian reprisals, allowing Israel to launch a war in which the Egyptian army would be destroyed before it absorbed its new weaponry, and the Nasser regime would be toppled. The policy of trapping Nasser into war was hammered out between Ben-Gurion and Dayan at the meeting on 23 October 1955, when Ben-Gurion instructed Dayan to prepare to capture the Straits.[71]

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[65] Ibid. iv. 1186-8, entry for 3 Oct. 1955, v. 1233, entry for 19 Oct. 1955; Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 16.

[66] Ibid. 428 n. 4.

[67] Ibid. 58.

[68] Toppling Nasser was a wish, and perhaps an aim, if not a policy, of the Israeli leadership long before the Czech deal. It began to crystallize at the end of 1954 and early 1955, against the background of the Bat-Galim and Lavon affairs. In May 1955, at a meeting of the Mapai ministerial caucus, Ben-Gurion expressed his loathing of Nasser and a desire to destroy his regime (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1001, entry for 17 May 1955).

[69] I. B. White (Tel Aviv) to State Dept. 5 Dec. 1955, NA RG 59, 684a.86/12-555, Box 2693.

[70] Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza, 64. The* British ambassador to Tel Aviv, Nicholls, who had a firm grasp of Israeli thinking, called the strategy one of initiating 'a deliberately contrived preventive war' (Nicholls to Shuckburgh, 31 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115908 VR1092/386).

[71] M. Dayan, *Diary of the Sinai Campaign* (New York, 1967), 12; Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 61-4. Ben-Gurion explained his policy to Sharett, too, the day before, but in veiled terms. He spoke against an '[Israel-]initiated war' but favoured 'reacting sharply to every Egyptian infraction' of the armistice agreement. But Sharett understood fully: 'Where is BG heading—only toward "retaliation" or [does he wish] to provoke a war? . . . Does he . . . strive for war with Egypt, but on condition that it does not appear in the eyes of the world an [Israel-] initiated war but [a war] forced upon us?' (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1239-40, entry for 22 Oct. 1955).

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The policy was then enunciated by Dayan at a meeting of the IDF General Staff on 26 October. The main danger to Israel came from the Nasser regime; Nasser had to be toppled. To do this, Israel had to engage and defeat the Egyptian army decisively, before it absorbed its new arms. But, because Israel could not afford to be branded an aggressor, war would have to be reached by a process of gradual escalation, to be achieved through periodic, large-scale Israeli retaliatory attacks in response to Egyptian infractions of the armistice. Moreover, if Egypt continued to block passage through the Straits, Israel would attack and (temporarily) hold the Straits and the coastline down to Sharm ash Sheikh. Dayan spoke of attacking the Straits within six to eight weeks. He assumed that Egypt would be unable to hold back and that a full-scale war would ensue—'no later than January [1956]'.[72] Ben-Gurion hinted at the policy in his Knesset address on 2 November 1955.

Dayan immediately activated the escalatory policy with three major IDF efforts. For the first two, the Egyptians duly supplied the necessary provocation, raiding an IDF outpost at Be'erotayim, in the Auja DMZ, on 26 October. On the night of 27/8 October an IDF paratroop battalion attacked the Egyptian outpost at Kuntilla, in Sinai. Ben-Gurion had instructed that, should the Egyptians deliver a counter-strike, the IDF should conquer the Gaza Strip towns of Khan Yunis and Rafah; should the Egyptians use aircraft, the IAF should bomb the Egyptians' Canal-side air bases.[73]

But the Egyptians held back. Dayan tried again on 2 November, the IDF attacking Egyptian positions at the Sabha, next to the DMZ. Learning from the Kuntilla raid, Dayan had asked Ben-Gurion to permit the IDF force to stay overnight in Egyptian territory, in the hope that this would provoke the counter-attack that would trigger the longed-for war. But Ben-Gurion, apparently fearing American or Anglo-American sanctions, ordered the troops to pull out. Perhaps he was also reluctant to precipitate a war without prior Cabinet permission. Generally, throughout 1955-6, Ben-Gurion displayed hesitancy and caution over launching what was eventually to be the Sinai Campaign. While often appearing brash, simplistic, and resolute in front of his Cabinet colleagues, Ben-Gurion in private repeatedly displayed a more brooding disposition, expatiating glumly upon the possible known and unknown repercussions of war.[74]

But another part of Ben-Gurion clearly sought pre-emptive war, however it was provoked. On or around 6 November, he asked the Cabinet to approve an operation 'to break the blockade'—that is, conquer Sharm

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[72] Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 36, 39-43.

[73] Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 68.'

[74] Ibid. 69-70.

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ash Sheikh. But the majority of the ministers, according to Ben-Gurion 'led by M[oshe] S[harett]', rejected the motion.[75]

Despite the setback, Ben-Gurion (and Dayan) persisted. Perhaps Ben-Gurion did not regard the Cabinet vote as final; perhaps he believed he could manipulate the situation and the ministers so as to emerge with their approval; or perhaps, at this point, he decided to go ahead without Cabinet approval. On 8 November he again told Dayan to prepare to assault the Straits.[76]

Dayan, for his part, bombarded Ben-Gurion throughout November-December with a stream of letters and memoranda urging an assortment of attacks on Egypt, including conquest of the position at Auja al Masri, opposite the DMZ, the Gaza Strip, and the Straits.[77] And, on 11 December, with Ben-Gurion's approval, the IDF launched the massive, more-or-less unprovoked strike against Syria known as *Mivtza `Alei Zayit* or *Mivtza Kinneret* (Operation Olive Leaves or Operation Sea of Galilee), in which IDF units destroyed a string of Syrian positions along the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. A few weeks before, on 19 October, Syria and Egypt had signed a mutual defence pact, providing for a joint military command under Egyptian leadership. The aim of *Mivtza `Alei Zayit* was to activate this pact and provoke the Egyptians into retaliating against Israel—thus precipitating an Israeli-Egyptian war. As Dayan explained to Ben-Gurion, three days before the operation:

> I don't care about not solving the fishing problem. [The ostensible aim of the operation was to retaliate for and end Syrian attacks on Israeli fishermen in the lake.] The Egyptians are afraid that we will get into a conflict with Syria, and that they, by virtue of the [mutual defence] agreement, will have to do something. They will have to take the first steps of aggression [against Israel].[78]

Mivtza `Alei Zayit was a 'last effort to provoke Nasser into war',[79] and was, at least in part, so seen by Egypt.[80] But, in this sense, the operation—

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[75] Israeli Cabinet minutes are still classified, and the available diaries—Sharett's and Ben-Gurion's—do not cover the event. But 6 Nov. appears to have been the date of the meeting. See seven-page, untitled memo. addressed 'To the members', Ben-Gurion, 28 June 1956, BGA; Dayan, *Diary of the Sinai Campaign*, 13; Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 434 n. 84.

[76] Ibid. 70-1.

[77] Dayan, *Avnei*, 162-5; Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 74-5.

[78] Quoted in Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 84. Ben-Gurion mentioned nothing of these calculations to Eban, when he subsequently wrote to the ambassador defending the operation. Ben-Gurion explained at length how all the fish had concentrated in the lake's north-eastern corner; how the Syrians were preventing the Israeli fishermen from making a livelihood; and how the IDF had had to act to help them. Perhaps, conceded Ben-Gurion, the 'timing' of the operation had been unfortunate (Israel at the time was awaiting an American response to arms requests), but it had been determined, he wrote, by the exigencies of the Kinneret fishing season (Ben-Gurion to Eban, 19 Dec. 1955, BGA).

[79] Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 85.

[80] Nasser to Hammarskjold, 16 Dec. 1955, transmitted by H. Trevelyan (Cairo) to FO, 17 Dec. 1955, PRO FO 371-115911 VR1092/464.

like its predecessors—failed, for Nasser, apart from some verbal fireworks, refused to be drawn.

Thus Ben-Gurion's final effort to provoke a war, despite and in defiance of, his Cabinet, came to nought. And his ministers, much annoyed by the operation, subjected Ben-Gurion to unprecedented criticism, as did many MKs, much of the press, and the Western governments. Israel was roundly condemned in the Security Council. On or around 15 December the Cabinet reiterated its firm opposition to an Israeli-initiated war, pre-emptive, gradually escalated, or otherwise. It also ruled that retaliatory strikes would henceforth need full Cabinet approval. The ministers refused to be manipulated into war. Reluctantly, Ben-Gurion consented. The pre-emptive war policy was scrapped; appropriate instructions went to Dayan. The IDF was stood down, preparations for the assault on Sharm ash Sheikh were aborted.

But, as Ben-Gurion and Dayan knew, they had half a year before the Egyptians absorbed the new weaponry. There was time enough for pre-emption, and possibly under better conditions. Meanwhile, Israel hunkered down in a defensive posture—a posture maintained until summer 1956[81]—and pressed on with its search in the West for arms to offset the Czech deal.

The Israeli-French Arms Deal, 1955-1956

The Czech arms deal propelled Israel into a frantic search for a major arms supplier. Like the Arab states, Israel, over the years, had received a thin trickle of Western, mostly British and American, arms. But the Tripartite Declaration, and the West's wish to maintain a balance and avoid an arms race, meant that even 'major' deals normally involved only a dozen or half a dozen aircraft or tanks, usually a generation old.

French arms, in very small quantities, had begun to reach Israel in 1954. In 1955 France became Israel's main arms supplier.[82] Since the start of the Algerian War in 1954, France had been on a collision course with the Arab world, particularly Egypt. France regarded Nasser as the main political, economic, and military backer of the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) (as well as of the Tunisian and Moroccan nationalist movements). Egypt supplied the FLN with arms and funds, and arranged the travel and lodging of the movement's leaders. A close relationship developed during 1955-6 between the French and Israeli intelligence services.[83] Israel, the enemy of France's enemy, emerged as a cardinal ally.

[81] Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 90-106.

[82] Ibid. 49-50.

[83] I. Black and B. Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars: A History of Israel's Intelligence Services* (New York, 1991), 171-4.

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Egypt's provocation of France over control of the Canal in July 1956 gave a last push to the policy of confrontation that was gathering strength in Paris, especially at the Ministry of Defence.

As French and American policies towards the Middle East, and Egypt in particular, began to diverge, with France more concerned about Algerian rebelliousness than Soviet expanionism, so French arms-sales policies became more independent. Even before the Czech deal Israel and France had agreed in principle on, though not concluded, two substantial arms deals, involving 53 Mystère II and Mystère IV jet fighters, 15 Vautour fighter bombers, 200 anti-tank missiles, and 60 AMX-13 light tanks.[84] But the French had dragged their feet over supply, the Quai d'Orsay opposing the budding arms relationship.

Nasser's public announcement of the Czech deal propelled Israel into a desperate campaign to acquire arms, as well as Western guarantees of its security.[85] Israel was 'at the edge of the abyss', declared Sharett[86] and flew abroad to plead for arms. He met Dulles, Macmillan, the British Foreign Secretary, and even the Soviet foreign minister, Molotov (to protest against the Czech deal).[87]

Efforts to procure arms from Washington continued for months. In February 1956 Ben-Gurion and Sharett met jointly with the US ambassador in Tel Aviv; Ben-Gurion, reported the American, was 'emotionally upset' and 'close to tears', Sharett 'unsmiling'.[88] In April Ben-Gurion addressed a personal appeal to Eisenhower.[89] But the Americans stalled and stalled—in effect, saying no. So did Britain.[90] Both linked arms supplies to an Arab-Israeli peace settlement. If Israel made the necessary concessions, it would receive Western arms and guarantees. Neither power was willing to 'compensate' Israel for Nasser's Soviet arms. And both intended somehow to compete with the Soviets for Nasser's and the Arab world's favours: supplying Israel with arms would further undermine their position in the Arab world. Israeli officials even weighed approaching the Soviets for arms—but quickly rejected the idea.[91]

The key to arms for Israel lay in Washington, and American policy was, in effect, one long (and dishonest) evasion. 'The question that confronted the American administration was not whether to supply Israel with arms

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[84] Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 50.

[85] Ben-Gurion's statement, protocol of Mapai Political Committee meeting, 28 Dec. 1955, LPA 26/55.

[86] *Divrei HaKnesset*, 19/2 (18 Oct. 1955), 85-8; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1230, entry for 18 Oct. 1955.

[87] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1248-72, entries for 25-31 Oct. 1955.

[88] E. B. Lawson (Tel Aviv) to SecState, 29 Feb. 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/2-2956, Box 2698.

[89] Ben-Gurion to Eisenhower, 4 Apr. 1956, BGA.

[90] The British ambassador to Tel Aviv, Nicholls, told the Israelis that they 'were quite wrong in regarding the acquisition of arms as the right or only possible solution to their troubles' (Nicholls to Shuckburgh, 31 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115908 VR1092/386).

[91] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1348, entry for 14 Feb. 1956.

but how to hide from her the decision not to supply them' was how one historian later put it.[92] Only on 29 March 1956 was Eban at last informed by Dulles that American arms would not be forthcoming; the United States had to consolidate its position in the Arab world; it was in Israel's as well as the West's interest. Israel must look to Europe for its arms.[93] For Jerusalem, it was 'a shattering blow'. Ben-Gurion referred to the American announcement, and the preceding months of delays, as 'a base deception'.[94]

But, in truth, Israel's leaders throughout had been sceptical about American intentions—Ben-Gurion and Dayan more than Sharett. Spearheaded by Shimon Peres, the Defence Ministry's director general, the Activists had focused their attention on Paris, where they carefully noted the growing divergence of French and American policies towards the Arab world. A flurry of secret Israeli-French contacts was followed by Sharett's meetings with the French leaders at the end of October 1955.[95] Peres and his aides consolidated the emerging bond. On 10 November, the two countries signed a major agreement, providing for the supply by France of 100 tanks (AMX-13s and up-gunned Shermans), 500 bazooka anti-tank weapons, and 1,000 SS-10 anti-tank rockets.[96]

In April 1956, the first Mystère IV jets arrived. On 22-4 June Dayan, Harkabi, and Peres, at a secret conference with French officials near Chantilly, concluded a major, $80 million arms deal, involving 72 additional Mystère IVs, to be delivered in three batches by February 1957; 120 additional AMX-13 tanks, 40 Super-Sherman tanks, and 18 105 mm mechanized artillery pieces. The deal effectively sealed the Franco-Israeli alliance.[97] A further, massive injection of French arms—100 additional up-gunned Sherman tanks, 300 armoured half-tracks, 300 6 × 6 desert-worthy trucks, a squadron of transport aircraft, and 1,000 additional bazookas—was agreed on at the last minute, at the secret Franco-Israeli Saint Germain Conference in Paris on 30 September-1 October 1956.[98] Most of the weapons arrived in October 1956, before the start of the Sinai-Suez War. By then the IDF had 380 tanks.[99]

Although France's supply of arms to Israel was to some extent encouraged

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[92] Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 173.

[93] 'Memorandum of Conversation' (Dulles, Russell, Bergus, Eban, and Shiloah), 30 Apr. 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/4-3056, Box 2699; Dulles (Pads) to acting SecState, 3 May 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/5-356, Box 2699.

[94] Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 182-3. Perhaps more than any other single factor, it was this prolonged Western—particularly American—deceit over the supply of arms (and security guarantees) that underlay Israel's programme to achieve a nuclear capability, launched in the mid-1950s. Israel understood that it could not rely on Western support when it came to the crunch.

[95] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1249-50, entry for 25 Oct. 1955, and 1254, entry for 26 Oct. 1956.

[96] Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 190.

[97] Ibid. 205.

[98] Ibid. 238.

[99] Ibid. 222.

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by the United States from March-April 1956,[100] Washington wanted the French deliveries ended once 'equalization' had been established, as Dulles told French Foreign Minister Pineau.[101] But France, driven into a corner by the Egyptian nationalization of the Canal, was no longer coordinating its arms sales with the United States (or Britain) by summer 1956. It was not 'equalization' but Israeli superiority that became the French objective: Paris was supplying the Israelis with more or less everything they needed to destroy Nasser. After all, the IDF was to secure the French left flank as the expeditionary force swept down on the Canal in November.

Dulles and Sharett alike had feared an open-ended arms race. Sharett felt it would destroy Israel's economy and that Israel, competing with far bigger and potentially richer neighours, was bound to lose. Nasser could thus 'defeat' Israel without firing a shot.[102] But, of course, it was not to be an open-ended contest. The race was short term and *ad hoc*—and ended in the sands of Sinai and along the banks of the Suez Canal in late October and early November 1956 when, almost overnight, the IDF and the British and French air forces turned most of Nasser's new Soviet weaponry into scrap metal.

Anglo-American Peace Initiatives, 1955-1956

Nasser's announcement of the Czech arms deal reinforced the conviction in Washington and London that, as long as the Arab states and Israel were in conflict, the Middle East invited Soviet intervention. Indeed, it was felt, in the absence of a Middle East settlement, there was little hope of recruiting the Arab states, and primarily Egypt, to an anti-Soviet regional defence system. 'The Israeli issue . . . stands in the way of co-operation between the Arab States and the West,' making the West 'impotent to counter the Communist advance,' wrote C. A. E. Shuckburgh, the Foreign Office under-secretary for Middle East Affairs, in December 1954. Shuckburgh was 'quite struck by the extent of Communist influence in the Arab countries'—and he held Israel responsible.

The time was more than ripe for a peace initiative. At the end of 1954,

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[100] The Egyptians were to claim that their recognition of Red China in May 1956 had been prompted by 'press stories' that the US had encouraged its allies to supply Israel with arms ('Memorandum of Conversation' (Dulles, Rountree, Burdett, and Ahmed Hussein, Egypt's ambassador to the us), 17 May 1956, NA RG 59, 611.74/5-1756, Box 2546). The Syrians and the Soviets in early 1956 concluded a 'second' Czech arms deal, with the Soviets supplying Damascus with $30 million worth of arms ('Memorandum of Conversation' (Dulles, Russell, Bergus, Eban, and Shiloah), 30 Apr. 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/4-3056, Box 2699).

[101] Dulles (Paris) to acting secretary of state, 3 May 1956, NA RG 59,684a.86/5-356, Box 2699.

[102] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1502, 1508, entries for 27 and 28 June 1956.

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Shuckburgh suggested that, in the absence of a settlement, the West might have to choose between the two sides, and 'Britain's major interest lay with the Arabs'.[103] There were other reasons for the Western impetus to find a solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict. Some Western officials feared that the destitute Palestinian refugee camp inhabitants could be used by the Communists to subvert their host governments. And there were pro-Zionist politicians and officials, in London and Washington, who believed that Israel could not long survive in an implacably hostile environment. Hence, a settlement was a vital Israeli (as well as Western) interest.

The major Western peace-making effort, codenamed 'Project Alpha', was launched in 1955. But a number of better-publicized efforts had preceded it. The best-known mediation effort had been conducted by Eric Johnston, an American businessman sent by Eisenhower to resolve Israeli-Arab differences over the use of the Jordan River waters. The Americans had hoped that the initiative, between October 1953 and October 1955, might eventually expand into full-scale peace talks. But Johnston's mission got nowhere, the Arabs rejecting his water-sharing proposals.[104]

In November 1955 Washington launched another mediation attempt (codenamed 'Gamma'), conducted during December 1955-March 1956, with former US deputy secretary of defence Robert Anderson shuttling between Cairo and Jerusalem. Egypt demanded a chunk of the Negev to link Egypt (Sinai) to Jordan, and wanted Israel to allow the Palestinian refugees to choose between repatriation and resettlement in the Arab countries. Israel countered with a readiness to discuss minor border changes and rejected mass refugee repatriation. There was no bridging the gap. Eisenhower blamed both sides. The Israelis, he said, were 'completely adamant in their attitude of making no concession whatsoever in order to obtain peace', while Nasser, who sought the leadership of the Arab world, was a 'complete stumbling block'.[105]

Plan Alpha

Between the Johnston and Anderson efforts came the Anglo-American plan named 'Alpha', which called for a non-belligerency agreement or 'an over-all settlement' (but perhaps not full peace) between Israel and Egypt

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[103] Quoted in Shamir, 'The Collapse of Project Alpha', in Louis and Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956*, 85; 'Memorandum of Conversation' (Shuckburgh, W. W. Butterworth, US chargé d'affaires (London), E. M. Wilson, first secretary, US Embassy (London), 15 Dec. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5, 684a.86.

[104] Shamir, 'The Collapse of Project Alpha,' in Louis and Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956*, 78-9; Oren, 'Secret Egypt-Israel Peace Initiatives Prior to the Suez Campaign', 357-8.

[105] Kyle, *Suez*, 99; Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 130-40; Shamir, 'The Collapse of Project Alpha', in Louis and Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956*, 80-1.

based mainly on Israeli concessions of chunks of territory in the Negev and the repatriation of a substantial number of refugees, with compensation for the rest. The Powers promised to guarantee the settlement and end the Arab blockade of Israel. The Western Powers offered Nasser, as additional incentives, substantial military and economic aid. [106]

Alpha was launched in March-April 1955, just after Israel's raid on Gaza.[107] Nasser seemingly agreed to play ball,[108] but demanded the whole of Negev. [109] A compromise formula—whereby Israel would cede to Egypt two triangles of Negev territory, with 'kissing' apexes—was rejected by both sides. Egypt, which also rejected high-level Israeli-Egyptian contacts,[110] wavered between insisting on having all the Negev, 'including Beersheba',[111] and accepting only chunks of it. Moreover, it insisted that Israel allow Palestinian refugee repatriation or, at the very least, offer full compensation.[112] At one point, the Egyptian foreign minister, Fawzi, suggested that,

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[106] Oren, 'Secret Egypt-Israel Peace Initiatives Prior to the Suez Campaign', 358; Shamir, 'The Collapse of Project Alpha', in Louis and Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956*, 81-2; Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 107-23.

[107] According to one historian of the British Empire, Alpha had its origins in proposals put to the Foreign Office by Britain's ambassador to Tel Aviv, Francis Evans. Evans in December 1953 suggested that the two Western Powers persuade Israel and the Arab states to accept a Western-guaranteed peace settlement based on Israeli concessions, including 'generous' compensation for the Palestinian refugees (see W. R. Louis, 'Britain at the Crossroads in Palestine, 1952-1954', *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, 12, 3 (Sept. 1990), 67, 74-5). But Evans was certain that Israel would never give up large slices of the territory it had won in 1948.

[108] Shamir ('The Collapse of Project Alpha,' in Louis and Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956*, 100, and elsewhere) convincingly argues that, by this stage, Nasser was more interested in the *process* of negotiation than in reaching a settlement based on Alpha. The process afforded, or promised to afford, various benefits—arms, Western funds, diplomatic points against Israel. But the plan, even if agreed to by Israel, would have been excessively embarrassing from Cairo's perspective (when Nasser was striving for leadership of the Arab and Muslim worlds), as it provided for Egyptian recognition of, and a separate settlement with, Israel.

[109] In the original draft plan, Shuckburgh had proposed that Israel cede the bulk of the Negev or that part of it 'south of Beersheba', as well as an 'area of Galilee' and submit to 'adjudication . . . of the demilitarized zones' (Shamir, 'The Collapse of Plan Alpha', in Louis and Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956*, 87). From Israel's perspective, this was a non-starter. It is worth noting that, three years earlier, Britain's prime minister, Winston Churchill, had had a firmer grasp than Shuckburgh of the Negev's importance to Israel: 'Surely there can be no question of Israel being asked to give up the Negev as its development might afford the only means of sustaining their great population of [Jewish] refugee immigrants?' Responding to Churchill's minute, W. Strang, the permanent under-secretary at the FO, wrote: 'We have of course not asked the Israelis to give it up, and can foresee no circumstances in which we should be justified in doing so' (Churchill minute to FO of 17 Nov. 1952, and Strang to Churchill, 19 Nov. 1952, both in PRO PREM 11-207). Yet Shuckburgh three years later was doing just that.

[110] Stevenson to FO, 5 June 1955, PRO FO 371-115842 VR 1072/14.

[111] 'Memorandum of Conversation' (Dulles, Fawzi, Allen), 24 June 1955, NA RG 59, 611.74/6-2455, Box 2546.

[112] Byroade to SecState, 17 Nov. 1955, NA RG 59, 684a.86/11-1755, Box 2693; 'Memorandum of Conversation' (Dulles, Fawzi, and Allen), 24 June 1955, NA RG 59, 611.74/6-2455, Box 2546; Dulles to Byroade, 9 July 1955, NA RG 59, 684a.86/7-955, Box 2691.

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if Egypt received the Negev, it would not insist on a refugee return and 'might be willing to take a position . . . that Arabs now residing in Israel should even have evacuation [to Arab countries] facilitated'.[113]

Throughout, both Egypt and Israel sought Western arms supplies. But the United States preferred to keep the arms and security guarantees in reserve as a carrot to reward real will and readiness to make concessions. In the absence of any real progress on Alpha, no arms or guarantees were to be forthcoming.

To break the deadlock of spring and summer 1955, Dulles decided to publicize the plan, albeit in an abridged form (which downplayed the expected Israeli concessions), in an address to the Council on Foreign Relation on 26 August. But, for all practical purposes, Alpha was already dead. Major rounds of Israeli-Egyptian fighting, beginning in August 1955, and Egypt's September announcement of the Czech arms deal ended all hope of a successful negotiation. A British attempt to revive the plan, in Eden's Guildhall speech on 9 November 1955, which called for Israeli concessions that would have reduced the country to a size somewhere between its 1949 borders and those of the 1947 UN partition resolution, outraged Israel's leaders. As Sharett told the Knesset, 'the essence of Sir Anthony Eden's proposal is the crushing of the State of Israel'. Privately, he told Dulles that the speech, 'a blunder . . . [and] a disaster', was 'bound to strengthen Arab intransigence and prevent [a] settlement'. Both Ben-Gurion and Sharett firmly ruled out any territorial concessions.[114] Neither the Americans nor the British quite comprehended the depth of Israeli opposition to ceding territory.[115]

The Road To War, April-October 1956

In March-April 1956, after Alpha had died almost unnoticed in the dark backrooms of diplomacy, and as Israel waited for answers to its appeals

[113] Byroade to SecState, 17 Aug. 1955, NA RG 59, 684a.86/8-1755, Box 2692.

[114] Ben-Gurion to Sharett (New York), 4 Dec. 1955, ISA FM 2455/4; Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 118.

[115] Shuckburgh to Kirkpatrick, 13 May 1955, PRO FO 371-115840; Dulles to US Embassy, Cairo, 10 Dec. 1955, NA RG 59, 684a.86/12-1055, Box 2693; Shamir, 'The Collapse of Project Alpha', in Louis and Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956*, 82, 85; Oren, 'Secret Egypt-Israel Peace Initiatives Prior to the Suez Campaign', 358-61. Shamir maintains that, rather than killing Alpha, the announcement of the Czech arms deal made the plan's sponsors 'regard it as more urgent'. Shamir presents Alpha's shortcomings and its architects' myopia, and quotes from Shuckburgh's minutes and correspondence to highlight his anti-Israel bias. At one point, Shuckburgh wrote: 'The process of betraying Israel is going to be both dangerous and painful' (Shamir, 92). In his meeting with Israel's ambassador to London (Elath) after Eden's Guildhall Speech, Shuckburgh denied that 'we [had] in mind any solution . . . [which involved] taking away the Negev [from Israel]'—which was close to an outright lie (Shuckburgh to Kirkpatrick, 13 May 1955, PRO FO 371-115840 VR1072/99).

for arms, the Gaza-Israel border heated up. Sniping and mine-laying by Egyptian troops and armed infiltrations became a daily occurrence. Israeli reprisals followed, capped by the shelling on 5 April of Gaza City, in which dozens of Egyptians died (see Chapter 12). Dayan (again) had probably sought to trigger a pre-emptive war. The Egyptians responded with a new wave of Fedayeen sorties, culminating in an attack on a synagogue in Moshav Shafrir, in which five school children were killed and another twenty, together with a teacher, wounded. A diplomatic shuttle mission by UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold helped prevent an immediate slide into war, and both sides agreed to abide by new cease-fire arrangements.

But the clock continued to tick, as Soviet arms poured into Egypt, as the Arab world hailed Nasser as its saviour and potential avenger against Israel, and as other Arab countries slowly fell into step with Nasser's pan-Arab, anti-imperialist, and anti-Zionist tune. The arrival in Israel of substantial quantities of advanced French arms may have increased rather than reduced the likelihood of war. True, without these arms, Israel would sooner rather than later have had to launch a pre-emptive war. With these arms, equilibrium was restored.

Yet, as Dulles and Sharett had feared, the arms race had a momentum and direction of its own. The arms build-up on both sides increased the temptation and willingness to go to war, more apparently so in Israel than in Egypt. By late 1955 the majority feeling in Israel was that war had become inevitable, and it would be better to get it over with as soon as possible. Jerusalem also felt that the IDF was absorbing its new French weaponry much more quickly and efficiently than the Egyptians were absorbing their Soviet weapons (as the October-November battles were to demonstrate).

To this, for Israel, was added the prospect of a first ever political and military alliance with a major Western power—and to go to war against Egypt with such a guarantor and arms supplier as France at its side was light years better than having to fight alone against Egypt (or against Egypt and whatever other Arab countries decided to join the fray). The fearful prospect of being branded an aggressor and isolated by the world community, and of not being resupplied after a pre-emptive war against the Arabs, was in large measure thus removed.

In spring 1956 France's leaders came to the conclusion that, in order to overcome or at least curtail the Algerian rebellion, Nasser and his regime must be overthrown. French defence chiefs and generals began to toy with the idea of an assault on Egypt, either in co-operation with Israel or using the IDF by remote control. It was this idea which underlay the June 1956 Chantilly Conference and the massive arms agreement concluded there. Just before the conference, on 17 June, Ben-Gurion had forced Sharett, the Cabinet's leading Moderate, to resign, thus clearing the way for

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an IDF assault on Egypt. The countdown to the Sinai-Suez War had begun.

Egypt, still wary of an Israeli pre-emptive strike (though as yet unaware of the depth of France's anger), curbed its Fedayeen in the Gaza Strip, though it stepped up organization and activation of proxy Fedayeen from Jordan's borders. At the same time, Nasserist propaganda and subversion in Jordan unleashed indigenous forces that, independently of Egypt, stepped up political, propaganda, and guerrilla warfare against Israel.

The raiding from Jordan, which culminated in September-October 1956, triggered massive reprisal operations by the IDF. Revenge and deterrence, as usual, were important factors. But the reprisals—at ar Rahwa, Gharandal, Husan, and Qalqilya—may have also been motivated, at least in part, by a desire to divert attention away from the Israeli-Egyptian frontier, where the real blow was about to fall. Israeli threats against Jordan in October, connected and unconnected to the possible dispatch to Jordan of an Iraqi expeditionary force (always seen in Jerusalem as a *casus belli*), were deliberately exaggerated as part of the same diversionary strategy.

By then, of course, war was inevitable. On 19 July John Foster Dulles had informed Egypt that the United States was no longer willing to fund the Aswan Dam project, on which Nasser had largely hinged Egypt's future agricultural development. Britain, which had also promised funding for Aswan, followed suit.[116] On 26 July 1956, addressing a crowd of some 100,000 at Alexandria, Nasser retaliated, announcing the nationalization of the Suez Canal.[117] Britain—whose troops had completed their withdrawal from the Canal Zone the previous month—and France almost immediately began to plan for a war that would topple Nasser and reassert Western control over the Canal.

Three months of military preparations and diplomatic effort followed. The United States, afraid that an Anglo-French confrontation with Egypt would lead to a Soviet takeover of the Middle East, pressed her NATO allies to accept a political solution. Britain and France, not interested in angering Washington unnecessarily, seemed to play along, hoping for American complicity or, at least, neutrality. They also needed the United States to fend off the Soviets and they had to have time to ready their forces for Operation Musketeer. Washington, for its part, did not adequately convey to London and Paris the resoluteness of its opposition to the planned assault on Egypt, nor did it indicate how it intended to respond if such an attack were launched.

At the same time, France, forever wary of the potential perfidiousness of Albion, and, in any event, anxious to strengthen the Sinai flank of the prospective invasion of Egypt, increased its co-ordination with Israel.

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[116] Kyle, *Suez*, 128-30.

[117] Ibid. 132-4.

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Arms shipments were expedited and, on 30 September-1 October, top representatives of the two countries secretly met in Saint Germain in Paris, to put the finishing touches to the bipartite alliance.[118]

Shuttling between Britain and Israel, the French managed to turn this into a tripartite alliance (or 'collusion', as the critics were to refer to it) at the final conference, in Sèvres, on 22-4 October 1956. Israeli, French, and British representatives signed a formal pact setting out the scenario of the coming war. The British insisted on maintaining the secrecy of the alliance and of the joint operation, a fact which was to tell marginally on IDF operations in Sinai, and to have a decisive effect on the Anglo-French operation along the Suez.

The scenario called for Israel to supply the detonator for Musketeer. The IDF was to strike out on 29 October across the Sinai Desert towards the Suez Canal (and southwards towards Sharm ash Sheikh); the British and French were to issue Israel and Egypt with 'appeals' to stop the fighting, which was endangering international maritime traffic, and to move (or keep) their forces ten miles away from the Canal; Israel would comply and Egypt, unwilling to relinquish sovereignty over the waterway, would refuse. British and French aircraft would then begin to bomb Egypt's airfields (thirty-six hours after the start of the Israeli operation). And British and French paratroops and marines would invade and conquer the Canal Zone. Israel pledged not to attack Jordan and Britain pledged not to come to Jordan's aid if Jordan attacked Israel. The stage was set for war.

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[118] Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 231-9.

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10
Sharett's Year, 1954

'There are elements [of] Great Tragedy in Moshe Sharett, [the] principal exponent of moderation', an American diplomat wrote in mid-1954,[1] as that tragedy was being played out during the year or so when Sharett held centre stage in the Middle East drama.

Ben-Gurion resigned from office on 6-7 December 1953. Sharett was caretaker prime minister until he was sworn in, as the Old Man's successor, on 26 January 1954, also retaining his portfolio as foreign minister. It was to be just over twelve months before Ben-Gurion returned to the Cabinet (as defence minister), twelve months in which Sharett was able to operate relatively free of that domineering presence, though Ben-Gurion's proxies, Lavon and Dayan, were always close at hand, causing trouble for Sharett and keeping Ben-Gurion abreast of developments. The twelve months were to be a protracted test both of Sharett's mettle as national and party leader and of the viability of a policy of moderation.

The first weeks of Sharett's premiership coincided with the final weeks of Unit 101, which was disbanded and merged with the 890th Paratroop Battalion in January 1954. During the weeks after Qibya, while Western condemnations poured in, Unit 101 was ordered to keep a low profile. It continued patrolling beyond the Green Line but avoided clashes with Jordanian civilians and troops.[2]

But the infiltrators gave Sharett no period of grace.

On 16 December 1953 two IDF soldiers were shot dead by a couple of partridge-hunting infiltrators a kilometre inside Israel in the Beit Govrin (Beit Jibrin) area. According to Glubb, the Arabs, armed with one shotgun between them, 'were not out to kill Jews', but had fired out of

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[1] I. B. White (Tel Aviv) to SecState, 12 May 1954, NA RG 59, State Dept. Records, LM 59, Palestine and Israel, Internal Affairs, Roll. 2.

[2] On the night of 1/2 Nov. 1953, according to a Jordanian complaint to the MAC, saboteurs blew up a water pipeline from 'Ein Fara to Arab East Jerusalm. UN observers noted tracks leading from the site of the explosion to Israeli-held Mount Scopus (Lt.-Col. W. T. McAninch (Jerusalem) to A. Cordier for Maj.-Gen. Bennike, 3 Nov. 1953, UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0-1). US diplomats suggested that it might have been a Jordanian provocation (S. R. Tyler jun. (Jerusalem) to State Dept. 5 Nov. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3. Milstein (*HaTzanhanim*, i. 236-7) relates that Unit 101 at this time ambushed an Arab car and bus near Latrun, hitting several passengers. I have found no trace of these attacks in the documentation.

fear when they encountered the armed Israelis. They were subsequently arrested by the Jordanians.[3]

In response to the killings, two Unit 101 squads, headed by Har-Zion and Baum, ambushed a car on the Bethlehem-Hebron road on the night of 18/19 December, killing a Lebanese-born Arab Legion doctor, Captain Mansour Awad.[4] That was followed on the night of 21/2 December by a daring raid by a four-man squad of Unit 101 on the outskirts of Hebron itself. Har-Zion led his men on a twenty-one-kilometre night march through the snow-crusted Hebron Hills, weaving between Legion patrols and ambushes, Arab villages and barking dogs, and, randomly choosing a house, blew in the door, killing two men and a pregnant woman, and wounding another man. The squad then fled under a hail of Arab bullets, more or less running the twenty-one kilometres back to the Israeli border.[5] In two further small retaliatory strikes, IDF squads attacked a bedouin encampment near Tarqumiya, west of Hebron, on 21 December, wounding one man, and blew up a house in Dhahiriya.[6]

The ambush of the Legion doctor annoyed Sharett, particularly because incoming defence minister Lavon had not informed him of the action beforehand.

Lavon's ideological-political evolution was more-or-less unique in Israeli history. Within the space of a few weeks, he changed from a leading Mapai Moderate to an extreme hardliner. At a Mapai Political Committee meeting in 1950, Lavon had violently berated the government's—and his party's—policy towards Israel's Arab minority: 'What is being carried out today is a drastic and brutal oppression of the Arabs in the State of Israel.' He flatly opposed a transfer policy towards the Arab minority,[7] and in

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[3] Tyler to SecState, 18 Dec. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3; Glubb to Comm. Hutchison, 31 Dec. 1953, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0.-45, HJK-1 MAC, Current 1954; 'After Qibya', unsigned (but by Glubb), 14 Jan. 1954, PRO FO 371-111069. According to Glubb, the two Arabs

> were walking up a small hill and when they got to the top, they saw two Israeli soldiers walking towards them. . . . They thought that if they ran away, the soldiers would see them and as they had rifles, [the soldiers] could shoot them . . . . They accordingly slipped down behind some rocks and waited until the two soldiers walked right up to them. They then gave them both barrels in their faces at point blank range.

The story, wrote Glubb, 'sounds fairly reasonable'. See also Tyler to State Dept., 8 Jan. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3, in which the US consul more or less blamed the Israeli policy, of killing infiltrators on sight, for the murder of the two soldiers: 'In the past, the two Jordanians . . . might have given themselves up. But they reasoned that it was a foregone conclusion that it was kill or be killed.'

[4] 'Report to the Security Council from the Chief of Staff on the [UN] Truce Supervision Organisation', Jerusalem, 24 Feb. 1954, ISA FM 2425/11; 'Extracts from the 160th MAC Meeting Held on the 19 and 21 Dec. 1953', ISA FM 2429/5; Har-Zion, *Pirkei Yoman*, 135; Milstein, *HaTzanhanim*, i. 238-40.

[5] Har-Zion, *Pirkei Yoman*, 169-73; 'Report to the Security Council from the Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organisation'. ISA FM 2425/11.

[6] 'Report to the Security Council from the Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organisation', ISA FM 2425/11; 'After Qibya', PRO FO 371-111069.

[7] Protocol of Politbureau meeting, 19 Jan. 1950, LPA 25/50.

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1950 tried to frustrate the transfer to Gaza of Majdal's Arab population.[8] But in October 1953 he was publicly excoriating the Arabs' 'vicious intention to destroy us',[9] and in 1954 he supported the death penalty for Arab infiltrators[10] and repeatedly proposed IDF conquest of tracts of Arab territory, in the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank.[11]

Lavon's 'adventurous activism' in 1954, which included a plan to bomb American targets in Amman to cause bad blood between Jordan and the United States, was even frowned upon by some of his military aides. His attempted torpedoing of the British withdrawal from the Canal Zone with the aid of an Israeli-Egyptian Jewish sabotage ring in Cairo and Alexandria was what led to his downfall (in the so-called 'Lavon Affair' or 'HaEssek HaBish'). 'A dangerous man' was how IDF CGS Makleff defined him in 1953.[12]

That 'adventurist activism' repeatedly angered Sharett, and Lavon's acerbic and somewhat devious personality also alienated both of his chief subordinates, Dayan and Defence Ministry director general Shimon Peres. Lavon, according to Sharett, both hid vital facts on Israeli (and Arab) operations from him, and lied. As Dayan put it, Lavon 'did not report completely truthfully'. [13]

Sharett was amazed by 'the revolution in the thinking and proclivities of this wise and talented man'. He attributed the change to Lavon's intoxication with power and to his wish to 'adapt' to the ways of the IDF high command.[14] Less charitably, Shaul Avigur, the former head of the Haganah's illegal immigration apparatus, said of the new defence minister; 'A brilliant mind in an ugly soul [*nefesh 'achura*].'[15]

Hearing of the killing of the Legion doctor, Sharett wrote to Lavon that he could not agree to such actions being undertaken 'without my knowledge'.[16] The note typified the relations that evolved between the two during 1954, which, in turn, were part and parcel of the long-standing Activist-Moderates dispute. Lavon, though not quite as devious as Ben-Gurion, seemed simply to have stepped into his master's shoes.

Ma`Ale `Akrabim (Scorpions Pass), March 1954

After a brief lull in January, infiltrator attacks began again when a settlement guard at Mahasiya, near Beit Shemesh, was murdered on 14

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[8] Morris, *1948 and After*, 259 and n. 7.

[9] Text of Lavon's speech at the conference of Ihud HaKvutzot VeHaKibbutzim, 31 Oct. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 59, Roll 6.

[10] Protocol of Mapai Knesset Faction meeting, 28 Mar. 1954, LPA 11/2/5.

[11] See, e.g. Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 27 Feb. 1954, BGA.

[12] Drori, 'Mediniyut HaGmul', 43.

[13] Dayan, *Avnei*, 139. Dayan, for his part, also did not always report fully or truthfully to Lavon about the IDF's operations (see Drori, 'Mediniyut HaGmul', 65).

[14] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, i. 50, entry for 18 Oct. 1953.

[15] Ibid. iii. 672, entry for 18 Jan. 1955.

[16] Ibid. i. 244, entry for 20 Dec. 1953.

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February 1954.[17] Five days later, a soldier was killed in an exchange of fire with bedouin marauders near Halutza, in the Negev. The following day, 20 February, Egyptian troops at Nitzana abducted an Israeli bedouin, and two Israeli bedouin were wounded by Egyptian soldiers or bedouin near Shivta.[18]

On the night of 17/18 February, in retaliation for Mahasiya, the IDF raided the West Bank village of Kharas, shooting dead a man and wounding his 10-year-old son.[19] A few weeks later, according to the Arab Legion, an IDF squad attacked the West Bank Ya`bad police station with a hand grenade, wounding a policeman, and killed two Palestinian shepherds while withdrawing.[20]

Nevertheless, western diplomats believed that Sharett was set on giving his 'policy of restraint' a try.[21] But, within weeks, that resolution was severely tested. On the night of 16/17 March infiltrators ambushed a civilian bus travelling up Scorpions Pass (Ma`ale `Akrabim) on its way from Eilat to Tel Aviv. In the worst terrorist outrage against Israel between 1949 and 1956, the gang shot up the bus and then boarded it, cold-bloodedly finishing off the passengers. Eleven persons were killed; three, left for dead by the gunmen, survived.[22]

The Israeli public was enraged, and, in the Negev settlements, severely rattled. The chairman of the Sha`ar HaNegev Regional Council, Arye Efrat, complained to the government of the desperate security situation; of the burden of guard duty; and of families leaving. He concluded: 'though nothing like Ma`ale `Akrabim has happened to us so far, the way things are going, if no steps are taken immediately, it could end in another such [massacre].[23] The leaders of Mapam, to which most of the kibbutzim were affiliated, complained of 'slackness' in setting up military outposts along the borders.[24]

IDF trackers, Sharett was told, had discovered two sets of tracks—one, from east to west, leading to the attack site, and the other, of some six people, leading from the attack site eastwards, towards Jordan,[25] but

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[17] 'Report to the Security Council from the Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organisation'. ISA FM 2425/11.

[18] 'List of Incidents on Gaza Strip Border and in the Demilitarized Zone at Nitzana', unsigned and undated (but probably by Foreign Ministry Research Dept. from early 1954), ISA FM 2439/1.

[19] 'Report to the Security Council from the Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organisation', 24 Feb. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[20] L. D. Mallory (Amman) to SecState, 16 Mar. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[21] S. Blackiston jun. (Jerusalem) to Secstate, 29 Jan. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[22] 'The Ma`ale `Akrabim (Scorpions Pass) Incident', Gen. Bennike, undated, UNA DAG-1.2.1.4-53.

[23] A. Efrat to the Interior Ministry Commissioner for the Southern District, 28 Mar. 1954, Sha`ar HaNegev Regional Council Archive.

[24] Protocol of Mapam Political Committee meeting, 25 Mar. 1954, HHA 90.66 aleph.

[25] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 404, entry for 18 Mar. 1954.

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stopping about six miles short of the Jordanian frontier.[26] The IDF immediately concluded that the attackers had come from Jordan: it said it had 'definitive proof' from 'reliable' agents sent to the Jordanian village of Sail, opposite Sodom. They had returned with news that a gang of eight or ten men had crossed from Jordan into Israel sometime before the massacre. The agents had obtained three names[27]—Mahmed al Qasqas, Suleiman al Sayidi, and Saras Abu Qreishan—which were passed on to the Jordanians on 22 March 1954.[28]

In Israel, there was a hue and cry for retaliation against Jordan.[29] But Sharett, favouring restraint, which would help repair Israel's image in the West, opposed a reprisal while the memory of Qibya was still fresh. Uncertainty about the perpetrators' identity facilitated restraint. For once, Sharett enjoyed Lavon's support,[30] and the Israeli press, following the government's lead, also fell into line and urged restraint.[31]

After 'much argument', the Cabinet, meeting on 21 March, decided to hold back from retaliation; to exploit political measures to the full; to call for a Security Council meeting; and, in order 'to satisfy the [Israeli] public', to walk out of the IJMAC if it decided not to hold Jordan responsible.[32]

Western diplomats in Tel Aviv feared that the massacre would undermine Sharett's policy and urged their governments to help him by taking a strong line on the incident. They recommended pressure on Jordan to open talks with Israel on tightening border controls. 'I am convinced that it is to our interest, and [that] . . . of Jordan, that Sharett should remain in power . . . and that . . . we ought to do everything we reasonably can to help him,' wrote Evans. Great resentment had built up in Israel against the UN agencies for failing to curb the infiltrators, and against the Western Powers for failing to come out strongly against the terrorists. The situation

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[26] Hutchison, *Violent Truce*, 48.

[27] Sharett to Israel legations (Moscow, etc.), 22 Mar. 1954, ISA FM 2949/18; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 406, entry for 21 Mar. 1954.

[28] Maj. A. Doron, IJMAC, to IDF General Staff officer in charge of MACs, director of military intelligence, etc., 22 (*recte* 23) Mar. 1954, ISA FM 2429/6 bet; Sharett statement to Knesset, 24 Mar. 1954; 'Telephone Message from M. Gazit of the Israel Embassy', J. P. Tripp, 14 Apr. 1954, PRO FO 371-111101. As the days wore on, it appears that the Israeli authorities became less certain about Jordanian responsibility (see Glubb to Lt.-Col. Melville (London), 26 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111099 (D72); Glubb to Melville, 26 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111099 (D721)).

[29] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 405, entry for 19 Mar. 1954.

[30] Ibid. ii. 406, entry for 21 Mar. 1954; Evans (Tel Aviv) to FO, 26 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111069. Dayan in this instance wavered between 'reflexive' Activism (Evans to FO, 26 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111069) and restraint (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 477,489, entries for 23 Apr. and 17 May 1954, in which Sharett quotes Dayan as saying that it 'was not proven' that the killers were Jordanians and that it 'was possible' that the killers were 'local', i.e. Israeli bedouin).

[31] Evans to Eden, 23 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111069.

[32] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 406, entry for 21 Mar. 1954. Ben-Gurion apparently disapproved of the Cabinet's restraint (ibid. 467-8).

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in Israel was 'explosive', reported Evans.[33] Sharett was fighting a 'running battle' against the Activists over retaliation for Ma`ale `Akrabim, reported the US ambassador.[34] Israeli diplomats in Britain and the United States also urged London and Washington to help Sharett; war might result if the border situation was not improved.[35] British officials feared that a fierce reprisal against Jordan was imminent and that Britain might be sucked in. Eden, the foreign secretary, urged Churchill personally to caution Israel against retaliating.[36]

The immediate upshot of the various pressures was Israel's walk-out from the IJMAC following its ruling (effectively that of MAC chairman Commander Hutchison (USN)) that the evidence linking Jordan, or anyone else, to the massacre was inconclusive. 'The possibility of Jordanians being responsible for this crime still exists; however, persons from outside Jordan could also be guilty. . . . This MAC will always avoid condemning a government on inconclusive evidence,' Hutchison said.[37] In an internal memorandum, Hutchison wrote the day before the MAC vote that, while the Israeli authorities were busy 'whipping public sentiment into a white heat' against Jordan, it was equally possible that the murders had been carried out by vengeful 'Israeli beduin' or bedouin from the Israeli-Egyptian DMZ.[38] The US Embssy in Tel Aviv felt Hutchison's abstention had been 'reasonable'.[39]

The Jordanians proved unable to trace the three suspects named by Israel.[40] From the first, Glubb had been convinced that Jordanians were not involved. Rather, he looked to Egypt for those responsible: 'We have information regular armed parties from Sinai and Gaza Strip are committing terrorist acts in Israel. Some of these deliberately escape into Jordan after[wards]. . . . Seems probable . . . incidents may be organised by [ex-]Mufti from Egypt.'[41]

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[33] F. H. Russell (Tel Aviv) to SecState, 24 Mar. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3; Memo. by Selwyn Lloyd, 23 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111089; Evans to FO, 25 Mar, 1954, PRO FO 371-111069; FO to UK ambassador (Washington DC), 29 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111086; Evans to FO, 23 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111098.

[34] Rusell to SecState, 24 Mar. 1953, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[35] 'Situation in Israel', R. Allen (FO), 31 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111070.

[36] Ibid.; Eden to prime minister, 31 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111070.

[37] Doron to IDF General Staff officer in charge of MACs, etc., ISA FM 2429/6 bet; 'The Ma`ale `Akrabim (Scorpions Pass) Incident', UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-53.

[38] Hutchison to Bennike, 22 Mar. 1954, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-45. See also Bennike to Cordier, 26 Mar. 1954, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-27.

[39] Russell to SecState, 24 Mar. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[40] G. W. Furlonge (Amman) to FO, 24 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111077.

[41] Glubb to Melville, 18 Mar. 1954; Furlonge to FO, 18 March 1954; Glubb to Melville, 20 Mar. 1954, all in PRO FO 371-111098. Glubb suggested: 'Israel apparently does not want trouble with Egypt but is desperately anxious [to] fix guilt on Jordan to eliminate effect of Qibya.' The British minister in Amman, Furlonge, wrote of Israel's attempts to describe the Ma`ale `Akrabim massacre as 'a Qibya-in-reverse' (Furlonge to Allen, 26 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111078).

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Arab Legion intelligence initiated a wide-ranging search for the killers with Glubb offering a £100 reward. Israeli intelligence was aware of Glubb's efforts.[42] The Hebron Hills and the Jordanian side of the `Arava were scoured for suspects,[43] and four Legion agents were dispatched from Hebron, 'without knowledge [of] each other's mission', to the Beersheba area, the Gaza Strip, and Sinai, to obtain clues or names.[44]

Glubb communicated the results of these enquiries to Whitehall on 29 March. The Ma`ale `Akrabim massacre had been carried out by members of the 'Black Hand' gang, 'tribesmen from Beersheba area driven from their land and relatives massacred various times by Jews. . . . Gang appears centred in Qusaima . . . in Sinai. All planned and carried out from Sinai.'[45] The Jordanians (and Hutchison in their wake) placed the bus massacre in the context of raiding and counter-raiding between bedouin sub-tribes, of the `Azazme and Tarrabin, living in Israel and Sinai.[46]

Israeli intelligence had long known of the existence and activities of the Black Hand. A year before the massacre, it had identified Suleiman al Dababa as the gang's leader.[47] But Jerusalem remained doubtful about the gang's responsibility for Ma`ale `Akrabim. One report which reached the Israeli authorities, from a Pakistani journalist-informant who had toured the Gaza Strip in April 1954, maintained that the bus massacre 'was organized and carded out by the [Egyptian] military authorities in Gaza with the help of the Palestinians'. The Pakistani claimed that this had been confirmed by the Egyptian officer responsible for the raid. But the raid, he maintained, had not been ordered from Cairo.[48]

A few months later, the new UNTSO chief of staff, Major-General

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[42] Glubb to Melville, 26 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111099; 'Concerning the Murder at Ma`ale Ha`Akrabim', Israel Foreign Ministry Research Dept., 21 Mar. 1954, ISA FM 2453/6.

[43] 'The Ma`ale `Akrabim (Scorpions Pass) Incident', UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-53; Furlonge to FO, 18 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111098.

[44] Tyler to SecState, 1 Apr. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3; Glubb, *Soldier*, 320.

[45] Glubb to Melville, 29 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111099. Glubb's view about the identity of the perpetrators apparently dovetailed with information that had reached the CIA (Dulles to US Embassy (Amman), 1 Apr. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3).

[46] For the evidence that led Glubb and Hutchison to this conclusion, including the names of some of the suspected killers, see Furlonge to FO, 5 Apr. 1954, PRO FO 371-111094; M. Gazit (London) to FM, 9 Apr. 1954, ISA FM 2949/18; J. F. Brewis to P. E. Ramsbotham, 9 Apr. 1954, PRO FO 371-111099; 'Additional Information Concerning the Ma`ale `Akrabim Bus Incident', 19 Apr. 1954, Hutchison to Bennike, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-45; Glubb to Melville, 12 Apr. 1954, PRO FO 111099; British Embassy (Amman) to Levant Dept., FO, 26 Apr. 1954, enclosing 'Summary of Report by Commander E. H. Hutchison to General Bennike Concerning his Investigations into the Ma`ale `Akrabim Incident' and minutes by Tripp, Brewis, and other FO officials, PRO FO 371-111101.

[47] Lt.-Col. B. Harman to IDF General Staff officer for the MACs, etc., 9 Apr. 1953, ISA FM 2438/6.

[48] Y. Tsur (Paris) to W. Eytan (Jerusalem), 7 May 1954, ISA FM 2401/16. See also minute by Tripp, 25 Jan. 1955, PRO FO 371-115896, asserting that the raid was carried out by `Azazme tribesmen directed by Egyptian officers linked to the Muslim Brotherhood.

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E. L. M. Burns, agreed with the assumption that the murders had been committed by Egyptians or persons under Egyptian jurisdiction. But there was no definite proof, he added.[49] Possible proof of Egyptian responsibility surfaced during Israel's brief occupation of the Gaza Strip following the Sinai-Suez War. According to an article in the *Jerusalem Post* of 7 December 1956, the identity cards of some of the Ma`ale `Akrabim victims were found in the possession of 'inhabitants of Rafah'.[50] It appeared that Glubb had been right, and Israel wrong. The Ma`ale `Akrabim killers had indeed come from Egyptian-controlled territory rather than Jordan.

Meanwhile, Hutchison's abstention in the crucial IJMAC vote had turned him into a primary target of Israeli wrath. Since his arrival in Israel in November 1951, Israeli officials had repeatedly suggested that he was pro-Arab, something Hutchison always denied.[51] Following the 23 March IJMAC vote, Israel wanted his head. Indeed, Sharett decided to make Hutchison's removal one of the two conditions for Israel's return to MAC meetings (the other being Jordan's agreement to border talks). Israel believed that Hutchison had hinted, in a letter to Bennike, that the attack might have been carried out by former *LHI* or *IZL* terrorists as an anti-Arab provocation.[52]

The alleged hint sparked a vehement protest from Sharett to Bennike about the

> extremes of the preposterous [to which Hutchison's] imagination can lead. . . . It looks very much as if [he] had become a victim . . . of a fantastic and pernicious delusion. His capacity for a sober and realistic appraisal of the facts . . . is . . . to be most seriously questioned.[53]

Bennike robustly defended his subordinate: 'In all his conversations with me Commander Hutchison has never indicated the possibility of members of a Jewish terrorist group being the killers'. Bennike then quoted from the testimony of the massacre survivors indicating that some of the killers may, indeed, have been non-Arab. In short, wrote Bennike, 'those who know him well will not suspect him of lacking in intellectual honesty, sober judgement and fairness'.[54]

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[49] Burns to Glubb, 3 May 1955, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-45, HJK-1-MAC.

[50] See PRO FO 371-121804 VR1091/1047. An IDF patrol apparently killed the head of the `Ma`ale `Akrabim gang in a shoot-out in Sinai in 1968 (see Z. Schiff and E. Haber, *Lexicon LeBitahon Yisrael* (Tel Aviv, 1976), 333.

[51] Less than a month before the Ma`ale `Akrabim massacre, the US consul in Jerusalem wrote of Israel's efforts to discredit Hutchison. Tyler's sympathies were clear: 'It will be difficult because not only is Commander Hutchison personally popular but he has gained the respect of all who know him by his intelligence, impartiality and fairness' (Tyler to State Dept. 22 Feb. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 1).

[52] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 473, entry for 20 Apr. 1954.

[53] Sharett to Bennike, 20 Apr. 1954, ISA FM 2429/6 bet.

[54] Bennike to Sharett, 22 Apr. 1954, ISA FM 2429/6 bet.

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Sharett was unhappy. Probably he had hoped that Bennike would oust Hutchison without a formal request by Israel. And here was Bennike himself suggesting that the killers may have been Jews. Sharett expressed 'astonishment and dismay'.[55] Lavon said that Israel had 'substantive evidence' that Hutchison was 'anti-Israel . . . from sources . . . not related to MAC decisions'. He should 'be given his papers and sent home'.[56] Israel kept up the pressure by boycotting the IJMAC, the Americans—who had seconded Hutchison to UNTSO—began to crack,[57] and by September it was all over. The UN secretary general, the chief of staff of UNTSO, and the State Department agreed that Hutchison had to go.

Israel had got its way over Hutchison. But not so—despite US and British support—with its demand that Jordan hold border talks. Jordan refused, fearing, or so, at least, it argued, that such talks would be viewed suspiciously by the Arab world. Nor was Israel any more successful in obtaining a Security Council condemnation of Jordan for Ma`ale `Akrabim.[58]

Nahhalin, April 1954

The massacre and Israel's subsequent restraint were rapidly overtaken by events. On the night of 26/7 March, a band of four infiltrators—Alik Isma'in Muhamad (of Beit Liqya), Mahmud Abu Aliya (a refugee from A1 Qubeib, resident in Beit Liqya), Hamdu Hassan (of Beit Nuba), and Zaidan Aljoz—raided the Jerusalem Corridor *moshav* of Kessalon, killing one watchman and wounding another.[59]

Lavon sought Sharett's permission for a 'limited' reprisal. He argued that not to retaliate now would 'completely loosen the reins'. Sharett, accurately gauging the public mood, agreed.[60] At the Cabinet meeting of 28 March, several ministers demanded retaliation. Sharett cabled his ambassadors in Washington and London:

> There is depression in the country because of the lack of retaliation [following Ma`ale] `Akrabim, which is being interpreted as weakness and indifference to [the loss of Israeli] life. . . . Throughout the [Mapai] Party there is confusion and lack of confidence in the correctness of my course. Among the military high command there is muted disquiet. . . . The Kessalon killing again demonstrates that the

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[55] Sharett to Bennike, 27 Apr. 1954, ISA FM 2429/6 bet.

[56] White to SecState, 17 May 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5.

[57] Russell to P. T. Hart, NEA, State Dept., 27 May 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[58] A few months later, the FM's legal adviser, Shabtai Rosenne, supplied an ironic twist to the affair. He wrote: 'I am not convinced . . . in the Ma`ale `Akrabim incident, that the [MAC] chairman was not right in rejecting [Israel's] complaints . . . Circumstantial evidence is dangerous to those using it' (Rosenne to Tekoah, 23 Jan. 1955, ISA FM 2429/8 aleph).

[59] Kat"am, Jerusalem, to IDF Intelligence Branch, 1 Apr. 1954, ISA FM 2453/7.

[60] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 415, entry for 27 Mar. 1954.

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> border areas are wide open, [and this] creates further depression, threatening a collapse of morale among the settlers, [and this] demanded a local response, which I approved . . . . The considerations are complex and require . . . careful weighing [between retaliation and restraint].

But Sharett warned Lavon against a large-scale reprisal, lest is be interpreted as a response to Ma`ale `Akrabim, for which Israel was still seeking diplomatic redress. Lavon gave Sharett his word and details about the impending strike.[61]

The retaliatory raid took place on the night of 28/9 March against the southern West Bank village of Nahhalin, which Israeli intelligence believed was a major jumping-off point for infiltrators. There was also a sense of historic revenge in this choice of target, as noted by the Israeli delegate to the UN Security Council meeting of 4 May 1954:

> Out of the area of Nahhalin in February [*recte* January] 1948 there came the first attack upon one of our convoys [*recte* columns] resulting in 35 of our people being massacred. In May 1948, out of the village and area of Nahhalin there was conducted the successful assault upon the [Jewish] Etzion [Bloc] villages, in which 160 of our settlers were killed.[62]

The attack on Nahhalin—called *Mivtza Arye* (Operation Lion)—was carried out by sixty men of the 890th Paratroop Battalion, commanded by Ariel Sharon. The orders were to kill Arab Legion and National Guard men in and around the village, and to avoid inflicting civilian casualties. The raiders reached Nahhalin undetected and attacked several houses. Five men, four of them National Guardsmen, were killed, including Rabah Mussalem, the village mukhtar. Some were apparently executed after they had been taken from their homes and separated from their womenfolk. One Nahhalin woman also died in the attack and fourteen villagers were wounded. An Arab Legion relief column was ambushed *en route* from Husan, and three Legionnaires were killed and five wounded.[63]

Jordan's Radio Ramallah reported that houses in Nahhalin had been booby-trapped and the village mosque damaged. The Israel Defence

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[61] Ibid., ii. 416-17, entry for 28 Mar. 1954, including text of Sharett to Eban and Elath, 28 Mar. 1954. Following Nahhalin, Sharett said that 'a wave of relief' washed over Israel, 'the country [once again] breathed freely' ('Précis of the Words of the Foreign Minister at a Consultation that Took Place in the Foreign Ministry on 12 Apr. 1954', 30 Aug. 1954, ISA FM 2448/15).

[62] Blackiston to State Dept., 31 May 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[63] 'The Nahalin Incident: Report to the Security Council by the Chief of Staff of UNTSO', 22 Apr. 1954, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-45; M. Yanuka, *MiKibiya `ad HaMitle*, (Tel Aviv, 1967), 33-4; Har-Zion, *Pirkei Yoman*, 179-82; FM to Israel Legations (London, etc.), 29 Mar. 1954, ISA FM 2949/14. Arab losses exceeded Sharett's expectations (see Sharett at meeting of Jewish Agency Executive, 13 Apr. 1954, CZA S100-92).

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Ministry denied the charges.[64] The IJMAC, which Israel was still boycotting, condemned the raid.[65]

Initially, British diplomats believed that Sharett had not known of the raid; perhaps it had been carried out by 'border settlers'.[66] But within twenty-four hours, the truth had filtered out: it had been an IDF raid and a policy of 'limited reprisals' had replaced 'restraint'. Evans described the change as a 'measure of the Prime Minister's internal weakness'. Elath, Israel's ambassador to London, described 'the intensification of the warlike atmosphere' in Israel and Sharett's difficulties 'in controlling' the Activists. As if to confirm this, Dayan, a week later, said that Nahhalin had been greeted by the Israeli public with 'a general feeling of satisfaction' and that 'there was [a] very deep conviction in the country that there was a point beyond which Mr Sharett's policy of appealing here and complaining there could not be pursued'.[67]

Israel denied any policy change, and its spokesmen attributed the raid to vengeful border settlers.[68] But no one was taken in.[69]

Nahhalin caused turmoil in the West Bank, though nothing like that which had followed Qibya. High school pupils in Bethlehem, Beit Jala, and the Dheisheh refugee camp staged demonstrations and called for revenge.[70] The Legion was criticized for not stopping the raiders, though the swift dispatch of the platoon from Husan and its losses in the IDF ambush did much to assuage public feeling. Western observers rightly regarded the Legion's swift, if ineffectual, response as a departure from the previous, much-criticized, 'non-interventionist' stance. The Legion, it was believed, was 'now committed to the defence of border villages'.[71]

The attack on Nahhalin, according to Glubb, hardened Jordanian attitudes toward Israel. If, before the raid, some Jordanian officials had favoured meeting with Israelis—as Jerusalem had demanded after Ma`ale

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[64] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 419, entry for 29 Mar. 1954.

[65] Report on MAC meeting of 30 Mar. 1954, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-27.

[66] Evans to FO, 30 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111099.

[67] A. R. Moore (Tel Aviv) to P.S. Falla, Levant Dept., FO, 6 Apr. 1954, PRO FO 371-111070. Sharett related that his own son had called to congratulate him on the raid (protocol of Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 13 Apr. 1954, CZA S100-92).

[68] Y. Herzog, acting director US Dept., FM, to A. Harman (New York), 22 Apr. 1954, ISA FM 2429/6 bet.

[69] Evans to FO, I Apr. 1954, PRO FO 371-111099; 'Situation in Israel', Allen, 31 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111070; Russell to SecState, 2 Apr. 1954, and Russell to SecState, 3 Apr. 1954, both in NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3. Glubb's description of the National Guardsmen's defence at Nahhalin (*Soldier*, 320-3) seems fanciful, with a lance-corporal with a Sten gun holding off an Israeli paratroop company. Glubb charged the Israeli troops with spraying the interior of the Arab houses with automatic fire, 'killing men, women and children indiscriminately'. But no children were killed and only one woman died at Nahhalin.

[70] 'Demonstrations in Bethlehem following the Nahhalin Incident', Foreign Ministry Research Dept., 2 Apr. 1954, ISA FM 2949/4.

[71] T. W. Seelye (Amman) to State Dept., 10 Apr. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

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`Akrabim—feeling against such a meeting became 'unanimous' following Nahhalin.[72]

Despite Sharett's denials, London and Washington interpreted the raid as a reprisal for Ma`ale `Akrabim rather than Kessalon and, therefore, at least initially, greeted it with some understanding.[73] But Jordanian anger immediately raised the fearful prospect of an uncontrolled escalation along the West Bank border. This was the burden of Churchill's message to Sharett on 2 April, following Eden's proposal that he 'warn' Israel that, if it came to war, Israel would also be at war with Britain. This, argued Eden, would aid Sharett in his struggle against the 'extremists'. But Churchill struck a somewhat milder note, perhaps reflecting his warmer feelings for the Jewish state. Churchill described himself as 'a friend of Israel and the Zionist cause', and called for 'patience . . . moderation and restraint'. The word 'warn' was not used, though there was a mention of Britain's treaty obligations to Jordan.[74]

Sharett responded that hundreds of Israelis had been killed by infiltrators, that 'in every instance it has been action from Jordan which has initiated a fresh and tragic cycle of violence . . . Israel does not want war . . . Yet no one will understand better than you how difficult it is for a virile community to look on passively' as its people are murdered. Ma`ale `Akrabim had profoundly stirred Israel, but the government had opted for 'restraint.' Even so, the United Nations had not acted. And then came the Kessalon murder. Jordan must be persuaded that it took a greater risk through inaction than through efforts to curb the infiltrators, Sharett told Churchill.[75]

Washington's displeasure was fuelled by dispatches from its Middle East stations suggesting that Israel was 'spoiling for a fight', had 'embarked on a deliberate policy of fomenting border disturbances . . . and appears prepared to risk open warfare'. Israel aimed at a revision of the armistice agreement and borders.[76] Rejecting Israel's allegations that the Arab states were 'engaged in planned aggression against Israel' (i.e. that the Arab states were behind the infiltrators' attacks), Dulles told Eban that Israel's actions were frustrating hopes for regional peace.[77]

But in internal correspondence Dulles was more candid. He explained that he had not 'read the riot act to the Israeli Ambassador', as his

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[72] Glubb to Melville, 31 Mar. 1954, PRO FO 371-111099.

[73] Blackiston to State Dept., 8 Apr. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3; A. Lourie (Jerusalem) to Israel Embassy (London), 14 Apr. 1954, ISA FM 2949/4; Harman (Washington) to US Dept., FM, 31 Mar. 1954, ISA FM 2429/6 bet.

[74] Eden to prime minister, 31 Mar. 1954, and FO to British Embassy (Tel Aviv), 2 Apr. 1954, both in PRO FO 371-111070.

[75] Sharett to Churchill, 13 Apr. 1954, PRO FO 371-111070.

[76] H. Byroade to SecState, 7 Apr. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 6.

[77] Dulles to Eban, 9 Apr. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5.

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assistant, Henry Byroade, had suggested, because it would have produced no useful results. True, Israel apparently wished to worsen the border situation in order to 'force peace on the Arabs'. But so long as the United States had no 'alternative' proposals, there was no point in delivering ultimatums to Israel. Dulles posed the problem bluntly: 'The basic fact of the matter is that the Arabs do not want peace and will not negotiate in any way for any sort of a settlement . . .' It was 'wishful thinking' to believe that the United States could persuade the Arabs to agree to negotiate with Israel, he argued.[78]

Israeli diplomats abroad were also critical of Nahhalin, the most outspoken being the minister to Brussels, Yosef Ariel:

> I am obliged to tell you that we [i.e. Israel's diplomats in Belgium] were all of the opinion that this matter was a great mistake . . . There is no logic in pursuing two contradictory paths [simultaneously]—to seek justice in the Security Council [over Ma`ale `Akrabim] and to take the law into our own hands [in Nahhalin].

Ariel also criticized the disproportion between the original Arab crime and the Israeli punishment.[79] A critical cable, implicitly condemning the raid as immoral, also arrived from Elath in London.[80]

Immediately after the raid there seems to have been an increase in IDF cross-border patrols,[81] but no substantial reduction in infiltration incidents. A year later, a senior Israeli police officer said that Nahhalin had done little, perhaps nothing, to ease the security problem in the Hebron foothills area.[82]

Nazlat Isa, Zeita, Khirbet Jinba, May-June 1954

In summer 1954 the IDF briefly reverted to the occasional mortaring of border villages and farmers in retaliation for infiltrator attacks, sniping, or trespassing. On 28 May Israeli units intermittently machine-gunned and mortared the West Bank village of Nazlat Isa, near Baqa al Gharbiya, wounding five villagers, one of them critically, and damaging the local mosque.[83] A similar attack on 18 June, against Arab cultivators near the

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[78] Dulles to Byroade, 10 Apr. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5.

[79] Ariel to West Europe Dept., FM, 2 Apr. ISA FM2429/6 bet.

[80] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 473-4, entry for 20 Apr. 1954.

[81] Seelye to State Dept., 7 Apr. 1954 (based on an Arab Legion report of 7 Apr. 1954), NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[82] 'The Efficacy of the Retaliatory Strikes along the Borders', P. Eliav, based on a conversation with E. Chelouche of the Police National Headquarters, 5 June 1955, ISA FM 2448/15.

[83] Report on IJMAC meetings of 29 and 31 May 1954, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-45, HJK-I MAC, Resolutions and decisions, 1951-4; P. P. Williams (Jerusalem) to SecState, 1 June 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

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neighbouring village of Zeita, wounded a 5-year-old boy. UN observers found tail-fins of thirteen 3-inch mortar bombs.[84] Some of the incidents were sparked by Arabs cultivating fields along or on the Israeli side of the demarcation line during the spring and summer harvest.[85]

On 9 May a chain of incidents was triggered when a large Israeli Border Police patrol crossed the line at Khirbet 'Illin, near Surif, and was attacked by National Guardsmen. Two policemen were killed, and a third Israeli died when IDF reinforcements joined the fray. A number of Jordanians died in the exchange.[86] Lavon later (privately) admitted that the Israeli patrol had been at fault in crossing into Jordan, guided, he explained, by an inaccurate map.[87]

Nevertheless, the Border Police decided to avenge its dead. Its 'units launched . . . a campaign of revenge along the border' involving sniping and ambushes.[88] Three Jordanian farmers were shot dead at Deir al Ghusun, north-east of Tulkarm, inside Jordan. At Falama, north-east of Qalqilya, Israeli patrols twice crossed the line and fired at farmers, wounding two men and two women.[89] An angry Sharett forbade Border Police initiatives along the line and Police Inspector General Yehezkel Sahar promised that 'the wild reprisals' would not recur.[90]

But matters did not end there. On 26 May an IDF squad crossed into Jordan near Khirbet Jinba, on the southern edge of the West Bank, reportedly in search of a flock of sheep stolen from Kibbutz 'Ein Gedi. The ten-man squad, unusually, was led by the paratroop battalion OC, Sharon, and included Har-Zion. (The composition indicated a punitive mission rather than sheep-hunting.) The raiders ambushed and killed two National Guardsmen and murdered two Jordanian farmers (and killed two camels) before returning (without any sheep) to Israel.[91]

'The Israel Prime Minister himself may not be in possession of all the evidence' about Israel's cross-border raids, suggested the British consul-general in Jerusalem.[92] That was certainly Sharett's feeling: 'Things are

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[84] Report on IJMAC meetings of 19 and 21 June 1954, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-45, HJK-I MAC, Resolutions and Decisions, 1951-4.

[85] British Embassy (Amman) to Levant Dept., FO, 1 June 1954, PRO FO 371-111102.

[86] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 483, 484, entries for 9 and 11 May 1954; 'The Khirbet *Illin Incident', Williams to State Dept., 18 May 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[87] Lavon at Mapai Central Committee meeting, 1 July 1954, LPA 54/23 bet.

[88] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 496, entry for 18 May 1954.

[89] 'The Jordan-Israel Frontier during May 1954, MAC Consideration of Incidents', Blackiston to State Dept., 9 June 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[90] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 496, 507, entries for 18 and 21 May 1954.

[91] Report on IJMAC meetings of 27 and 28 May 1954, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-45, HJK-I MAC, Resolutions and Decisions 1951-4; Sharett (*Yornan Ishi*, ii. 520) entry for 29 May 1954, described it as 'a condemnable incident'. See also Williams to SecState, 28 May 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3. Har-Zion (*Pirkei Yoman*, 187-9) describes the incident humorously and omits mention of the murders and the killing of the camels.

[92] T. Wikeley (Jerusalem) to FO, 14 May 1954, PRO FO 371-111101 VR 1091/87.

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happening without my being informed. I hear reports on the Voice of Israel and read [about raids] afterwards in the newspapers without knowing their true background', he complained to Lavon.[93] Sharett suspected that Lavon himself, given his bad relations with Dayan, was not privy to much that was going on. 'And this makes matters even worse,' Sharett confided to his diary. Lavon 'was not in control' of the army 'and . . . he lacked the courage to admit this to me'. Sharett summoned the two men, separately, for a dressing down, 'to end, once and for all, the wild cross-border behaviour . . . every Monday and Thursday, without taking account of the damaging consequences'.[94]

On 1 June Sharett and Lavon had it out. Lavon defended the attack on Nazlat Isa but admitted that the 'facts [regarding Khirbet Jinba] . . . were very grave'. Instructions prohibiting killing had gone out after the Border Police revenge attacks. Sharon's patrol at Khirbet Jinba 'had acted in complete contravention of this order'. Dayan, said Lavon, had himself admitted that a 'shameful', grave mishap had taken place. Lavon blamed the chief of operations, General Yosef Avidar, saying that he was 'led on' by 'the young men' around him. An internal IDF inquiry was looking into Khirbet Jinba, and orders had been issued forbidding cross-border patrols—'at long last', commented Sharett. Pressing his advantage, Sharett also complained about IDF exercises near the border which led to shots falling into the West Bank and provoking incidents or ill-will. Somewhat mollified, Sharett summed up the meeting: 'Not for a long time now have I felt such a degree of agreement with the defence minister.'[95] Lavon promised that he would keep Sharett informed.[96]

'Azzun, June 1954

But things quickly deteriorated again on 19 June 1954 when a band of seven armed Israeli farmers from the right-wing Herut-affiliated settlement of Mevo Beitar crossed '1,200 metres' into Jordan and fired on Arab shepherds and farmers. National Guardsmen engaged them, killing three of the Israelis. IDF mortars, joining in, injured a pregnant Arab woman in the stomach in the nearby village of Husan; the woman lost the baby. Lavon called the National Guard action an 'ambush' and 'deliberate murder', and Israel falsely announced that the killings had occurred inside Israel and that the Jordanians had dragged the bodies into Jordan.[97]

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[93] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 514, entry for 25 May 1954.

[94] Ibid. ii. 524-5, entry for 31 May 1954. Dayan failed to show up for the dressing-down.

[95] Ibid. ii. 526, entry for 1 June 1954.

[96] Lavon to Sharett, 31 May 1954, ISA PMO 5433.

[97] US delegation, UN, to State Dept., 29 June 1954 (enclosing Hammarskjold to Sharett, 24 June 1954, and Bennike to Hammarskjold, 24 June 1954), NA RG 59, Dept. LM 60, Roll

(Footnote continued on next page)

The 19 June clash was one of a string of incidents involving members of Mevo Beitar and their Arab neighbours in Battir, Husan, and Wadi Fukin. The settlers, many of them former *IZL* terrorists, often mounted provocative cross-border patrols which, over the years, resulted in the death of more than a dozen Arab villagers. A number of Mevo Beitar members were also killed, either during these clashes or in infiltrator raids.[98]

A week later, on 27 June, infiltrators reached the town of Ra`anana, north-east of Tel Aviv, and murdered a farmer, Max Reiner. They then returned to Jordan (after losing one man killed to an Israeli patrol) and were arrested by Arab Legionnaires.[99] The three detained infiltrators were apparently from the West Bank village of 'Azzun.

Israel regarded the raid as 'grave', the murder having occurred near Tel Aviv;[100] retaliation was seen as essential. The IDF struck on the night of 27/8 June, targeting the Arab Legion camp at `Azzun, thirteen kilometres east of Qalqilya. The objective, according to Lavon, was 'to tell the Legion and the Government of Jordan, that if they can reach Ra`anana, we can penetrate even further'.[101] The seven-man raiding team was led by Major Aharon Davidi, the paratroops' deputy OC, and Har-Zion, who, before reaching the camp, stabbed an Arab peasant to death (so that he would not raise the alarm, Har-Zion later explained). The paratroopers then surprised the sleeping Legionnaires in their tents, killing three and wounding another three before withdrawing. One Israeli, Sergeant Yitzhak Jibli, was wounded and left behind, to be captured by the Jordanians. Lavon described the raid as a 'brilliant operation'. Next morning, Israel announced that a patrol had 'mistakenly' strayed into Jordan—'a very foolish announcement', as Lavon put it. ('Again lying through our teeth!,' said Sharett.)[102]

The `Azzun raid—as intended—had shocked the Jordanians, who called

(Footnote continued from previous page)

3; Lavon at Mapai Central Committee meeting, 1 July 1954, LPA 54/23 bet; W. E. Cole (Jerusalem) to SecState, 20 June 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[98] An early incident between Mevo Beitar members and Arab villagers is described in 'Report of a General Trip in the "Mazleg" on 5 Apr. 1951 with a Regional Defence Officer', Avraham Ikar to Settlement Dept. (Jewish Agency), 10 Apr. 1951, CZA 15-9786. See also E. Kafkafi ('Ha`Aliya HaHamonit: Shalav BeTahalich HaRevisionizatziya shel HaMedina') who argues that Mevo Beitar members systematically provoked clashes to draw in the IDF, and precipitate retaliatory strikes, and, perhaps, a war which would lead to Israeli conquest of the West Bank.

[99] 'June 1954 along the Jordan-Israel Frontier', Blackiston to State Dept., 13 June (*recte* 13 July) 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[100] Lavon at Mapai Central Committee meeting, 1 July 1954, LPA 54/23 bet; C. B. Duke (Amman) to Shuckburgh (FO), 24 July 1954, PRO FO 371-111104 VR1091/168; Duke to Eden, 27 July 1954, PRO FO 371-111073 VR1072/150.

[101] Lavon at Mapai Central Committee meeting, 1 July 1954, LPA 54/23 bet.

[102] Har-Zion, *Pirkei Yoman*, 189-192; 'June 1954 along the Jordan-Israel Frontier', 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3; Dayan, *Avnei*, 126; Lavon at Mapai Central Committee meeting, 1 July 1954, LPA 54/23 bet; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 550, entry for 28 June 1954.

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for Israel's expulsion from the United Nations.[103] The raid—codenamed Operation Baruch 1—triggered a cycle of violence. Jordanian troops in East Jerusalem, apparently reacting spontaneously to the attack on their comrades in `Azzun,[104] opened fire on targets in Jewish West Jerusalem on 30 June. The IDF responded vigorously and firing went on intermittently until 2 July, provoking a 'mass flight [of Jordanians] from the Old City to Ramallah . . . The roads were filled with refugees.' In all, three Israelis and five Jordanians died, and each side suffered just over two dozen wounded.[105]

UN observers were unable to determine who had fired 'the famous first shot', although the IDF fired far more than the Jordanians. (One report spoke of the Israelis firing sixty 2-inch and 3-inch mortar rounds to fourteen 2-inch rounds by the Legion.) When the United Nations complained that Israel had used mortars, Dayan replied that that was 'a mistake, [we] should have used artillery'. Ambassador Russell reported that the IDF had apparently adopted a policy 'of replying to even minor Arab fire with fire of all weapons IDF have available in vicinity . . .'. At a meeting with Bennike on 1 July, Dayan reportedly said: 'I will return fire with everything but atom bomb, and not necessarily confine it to the area from which I am being fired at.' Several dozen mortar bombs had fallen on or next to churches and monasteries inside the Old City. Jordanian troops fired occasional rounds from the Old City walls into West Jerusalem during the rest of July. Apparently to reduce tension, Glubb withdrew National Guard units and replaced them with better-disciplined Legionnaires.[106]

But the Jordanians still held Jibli; indeed, they threatened to try him for murder. The IDF was determined to get him back.[107] When negotiations failed, the IDF resolved to free Jibli by force, by capturing Jordanians for an exchange. On the night of 31 July/1 August, an Israeli paratroop squad led by Har-Zion crossed the border near Jenin and wounded one Jordanian policeman and captured another. A National Guardsman was killed during the patrol's withdrawal.[108] On 13 August an IDF patrol attacked a three-man Arab Legion squad at Sheikh Madh-Kur, near Surif, capturing one

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[103] Duke to Shuckburgh, 29 June 1954, PRO FO 371-111072; Jordan Foreign Ministry to US, British, and French embassies (Amman), 28 June 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[104] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 551, entry for 30 June.

[105] Lavon at Mapai Central Committee meeting, 1 July 1954, LPA 54/23 bet; Glubb, *Soldier*, 332-4; 'June 1954 along the Jordan-Israel Frontier', NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3.

[106] Russell to SecState, 3 July 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3; Mallory to SecState, 2 July 1954, and Mallory to SecState, 3 July 1954, both in NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3; and 'Infiltration—Monthly Report—July 1954,' Israel Police Special Branch, Aug. 1954, ISA FM 2402/12.

[107] Y. Tekoah, director for MAC affairs, to Col. B. Givli, DMI IDF, 13 Aug. 1954, ISA FM 2436/4.

[108] Arab Legion press release, 1 Aug. 1954, in NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4; Har-Zion, *Pirkei Yoman*, 193-5.

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man and killing another.[109] A third raid, on 30 August at Khirbet Sikka and Khirbet Deir al `Asal, in the Hebron foothills, also 'intended to take prisoners, for an exchange . . .', failed, though a Legionnaire was killed and three National Guardsmen were wounded. Four Israeli soldiers were wounded by Arab counter-fire.[110]

An IDF spokesman subsequently explained that the clash had resulted from an IDF 'exercise'. Lavon dismissed the UN findings, that the IDF had penetrated 400 metres into Jordan and had fired mortars across the border, as 'one-sided'. 'I am entirely confident', he said, 'that in this particular case our soldiers did not open fire nor did they provoke the Legionnaires in any other way.'[111] Lavon may have been lying or he may himself have been misled.

Apparently, at least some of the prisoner-taking raids, perhaps even the whole campaign, had not received Cabinet authorization.[112] On 25 August 1954 Dayan called in Sharon, the paratroop commander, and informed him 'that there is no permission for an operation across the border to capture a hostage for subsequent exchange for Jibli'. Sharon apparently had informed Dayan of one or two of the raids, but had explained they were reconnaissance missions, not designed to capture prisoners.[113]

Beit Liqya and Bir Ma`in, September-October 1954

But, within days, infiltrators presented the IDF with a tailor-made provocation. A band from Jordan on 28 August shot and killed a guard, and wounded another, in Moshav Ramat Raziel in the Judaean Hills. Israeli officials later publicly accused the Jordanian 'security forces' of 'connivance' in the murder.[114] On 30 August Sharett (or the full Cabinet) approved a retaliatory strike.[115]

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[109] Mallory to SecState, 14 Aug. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4.

[110] 'Report by the Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organization to the Secretary General Concerning the Incident in the Beit Liqya Area', Burns, 14 Sept. 1954, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-52; Gur, *Peluga Dalet*, 44; Cole to SecState, 5 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4.

[111] Burns to Sharett, 5 Sept. 1954, and Lavon to Bums, 8 Sept. 1954, both in UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-45, Khirbet Sikka-Deir al 'Asal.

[112] This is hinted in Dayan to Sharett, 19 Jan. 1955, BGA, Correspondence 1955.

[113] Dayan, *Avnei*, 132.

[114] Eytan to Bums, 23 Sept. 1954, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-52; Russell to SecState, 30 Aug. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4. The Jordanians objected to defining Israeli raids as 'retaliatory raids', as the definition presumed Arab responsibility for an initial crime (see P. Geren (Amman) to State Dept., 10 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4). The Jordanians argued that some of the crimes that Israel attributed to infiltrators were something else altogether. They had examples. On the night of 29/30 Dec. 1953, for example, an Israeli watchman at 'Ajjur was wounded—by infiltrators from Jordan, according to the Israeli complaint to the IJMAC. Three months later, the Israeli press (according to an Arab Legion
[*nn. 114 and 115 cont. overleaf*

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Sharon told his troops that the aim of the operation was to 'take prisoners. . . . Jibli's fate was linked [to this]'.[116] On the night of 112 September 1954 a four-pronged IDF force of the 890th Paratroop Battalion attacked the village of Beit Liqya, north of the Latrun Salient, in an operation codenamed Operation Binyamin 2. The objective of the main prong, under Davidi, was to attack the (empty) village school and draw Arab Legion relief columns into the area. The three other prongs, led by Marcel Tubias, Baum, and Har-Zion, were to ambush these reinforcements and to capture Legionnaires. Davidi's probe on the southern side of the village was discovered by National Guardsmen, who opened up with light weapons fire. 'The [Israeli] troops reacted shamefully,' cowering in ditches and ignoring orders to return fire, platoon commander Moshe Yanuka wrote years later. Within minutes, Davidi's force was in retreat, carrying home two dead and several wounded. Only Har-Zion's platoon carded out its mission, killing three Legionnaires and capturing another three. An Arab woman was wounded in Beit Liqya and three Legionnaires were wounded in an exchange with Baum's ambush.[117]

Some Arab Legion officers seem to have believed that Israel had intended a full-fledged assault on Beit Liqya, but had been stymied by the 'prompt action' of the local Guardsmen.[118] Other Jordanian officials understood that it had been a trap 'designed to draw the Legion into the fight'.[119] The raid triggered American representations to Israel, including a request that Israel return the captured Jordanians.[120] King Hussein told the US ambassador in Amman that, 'if the Israelis continued to demand trouble, one of these days Jordan would give them plenty'. The American reflected that Israeli policy was 'damaging the US position' in the area. His British counterpart cabled Whitehall that the Legion's patience was 'wearing thin' and that a Jordanian counter-strike could result in 'large

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report) reported: 'A guard of `Ajjur village . . . was found guilty in the Jerusalem Magistrates Court of having shot himself in the leg and then [informing] the police that an unknown person had shot him.' The ex-guard was sentenced to an 1£30 fine or a month's imprisonment ('Israel Justice', Arab Legion HQ, 11 Sept. 1954, appended to Seelye to State Dept., 13 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4).

[115] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 572, entry for 30 Aug. 1954.

[116] Har-Zion, *Pirkei Yoman*, 201.

[117] 'Report by the Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organization to the Secretary-General Concerning the Incident in the Beit Liqya Area', Burns, 14 Sept. 1954, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-52; 'Attack on Beit Liqya, Another Qibya Effectively Prevented by Jordan Forces', Arab Legion HQ, 4 Sept. 1954, appended to Seelye to State Dept., 4 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4; Yanuka, *MiKibiya `ad HaMitle*, 38-41; Har-Zion, *Pirkei Yoman*, 201-3; Gut, *Peluga Dalet*, 47-50.

[118] Hutton to Glubb, 4 Sept. 1954, PRO FO 371-111101 VR1091/89e.

[119] Memo. by Shuckburgh, 4 Sept. 1954, quoting Jordanian ambassador to London, PRO FO 371-111074 VR1072/187.

[120] Smith, acting secretary of state, to Tel Aviv, 4 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4; 'Memorandum of Conversation', 4 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll.4.

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scale hostilities', with 'disastrous results on [Britain's] position in the Middle East'.[121] The British urged Jordan to continued restraint.[122]

Israeli officials argued that Beit Liqya had been necessary to keep up the morale of the border settlers; the IDF also had 'morale problems', stemming from Jibli's continued imprisonment. Jordanian prisoners had to be taken to obtain his release.[123] But others, such as Eban, told American diplomats that Beit Liqya was in part due to the Activists' desire to undermine the Moderates, and that Ben-Gurion, though out of office, continued to wield influence over Israeli decision-making.[124] Israel Foreign Ministry director general Eytan compared Dayan to General MacArthur, who had tried to undermine President Truman's Korean War policy.[125]

But Dayan also had a wise (if unpredictable) streak to him. On the morrow of Beit Liqya, and possibly prompted by Sharett, he decided to try a unilateral gesture of conciliation. If Jordan refused to trade prisoners from a position of weakness (Israel held five to Jordan's one) and under intimidation, perhaps it would respond to an unconditional, unilateral act of magnanimity. On 3 September, at a farewell lunch for the departing UNTSO chief, Bennike, Dayan, 'as soup was served', asked Burns, the incoming UNTSO chief, whether an 'unconditional' Israeli release would result in the Jordanians releasing Jibli. He added that Israel would go on taking prisoners if a deal was not reached. Burns agreed to pass the idea on to Amman. The following day, Israel released the four Legionnaires and the policeman. Burns then interceded in Amman for the release of Jibli.[126] The Jordanians (probably with relief) agreed, but insisted (probably to save face) that some time pass before they fulfil their part in the tacit bargain.[127] Jibli was released on 29 October 1954.

Throughout, there were rumours of a possible Jordanian revenge attack for Beit Liqya.[128] Western diplomats in Amman during the mid-1950s were forever warning of the cycle of attack and revenge that the Israelis were precipitating by their raids. Immediately after Beit Liqya, the US Embassy in Amman had warned: 'For every person killed in Qibya and Nahhalin there is a whole clan of Arabs awaiting the moment when they can work their revenge on Israelis.'[129] At the 3 September meeting of the IJMAC,

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[121] Mallory to SecState, 2 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4; Duke to Falla, 4 Sept. 1954, PRO FO 371-111074 VR1072/190; Mallory to SecState, 4 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4; Geren to State Dept., 10 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5.

[122] Memo. by Shuckburgh, 4 Sept. 1954, PRO FO 371-111074 VR1072/187.

[123] Gilroy (Jerusalem) to SecState, 6 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59 LM 60, Roll 4.

[124] Russell to SecState, 5 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4.

[125] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 573, entry for 3 Sept. 1954.

[126] Duke to Shuckburgh, 8 Sept. 1954, PRO FO 371-111081 VR1073/211; Wilson (Jerusalem) to FO, 3 Sept. 1954, PRO FO 371-111074 VR1072/182.

[127] Geren to State Dept., 10 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5.

[128] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 574, entry for 7 Sept. 1954.

[129] Geren to State Dept., 10 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 5.

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a Jordanian officer gave notice: 'The Jordan Government would no longer take steps to hinder individual acts of retaliation.'[130]

On 10 September a bedouin Legionnaire, Private Hamad Hamid, whose Legionnaire cousin had died in Har-Zion's ambush on the road to Beit Liqya, crossed the border and attacked an IDF observation post at Bir Ma`in, killing two Israelis. Returning to Jordan, he turned in his rifle, saying that 'honour had been satisfied'.[131] A court martial sentenced him to six months' jail, for 'disobedience'. But on the night of 10/11 October he escaped from custody and again crossed the border, bent on further revenge. He was shot dead by Israelis on 11 October after he had lobbed grenades at an IDF convoy. Glubb noted that:

> Hamad . . . was only following the same policy of retaliation which the Israelis have practised and condoned in the past. While the Israelis, however, attack innocent villagers, Hamad's action was on both occasions against Israeli troops.[132]

The Gaza-Israel Border, 1954

Whereas, overall, infiltration, including terrorist infiltration, steadily declined along the Israeli-Jordanian border, the Gaza-Israel border gradually heated up during 1954, so that, by early 1955, it had become the main focus of Israeli-Arab hostilities. Sharett's year thus witnessed a shift of regional, and indeed world attention from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip as the problematic heart of the Israeli-Arab conflict.

In early 1954 there was a major increase in infiltration from the Gaza Strip. As in 1953, the Egyptian authorities tried to contain it, but with little success. Most of the infiltration was economic, but there was also an increase in penetrations by 'official' squads sent to gather intelligence. Illegal refugee movement from the Strip to the Hebron Hills through the

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[130] Duke to Falla, 4 Sept. 1954, PRO FO 371-111074 VR1072/190; Mallory to SecState, 4 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4.

[131] Mallory to SecState, 11 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4.

[132] Glubb to Burns, 18 Oct. 1954, PRO FO 371-11106; minute by Tripp, 2 Nov. 1954, PRO FO 371-111082 VR1073/261b; and Cole to SecState, 28 Oct. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4. Jordan declined to reveal the identity of the dead infiltrator, saying that this would aid Israeli propaganda. They also charged that Israel did not punish Israelis who killed Arabs (J. C. B. Richmond (Amman) to J. F. Brewis, Levant Dept., FO, 31 Jan. 1955, PRO FO 371-115852, VR1073/69).
The Jordanians had a point. Thus, no punishment was meted out to the three Israelis, apparently members of Mevo Beitar, who, on 11 Sept. 1954, fired without provocation on children swimming in a reservoir some 400 metres inside Jordan at Wadi Fukin, severely wounding a 12-year-old and a 13-year-old. The IJMAC subsequently condemned Israel 'in the strongest terms' (IJMAC report on the meeting of 13 Sept. 1954, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-27; Cole to SecState, 14 Sept. 1954, enclosing Legion report on the incident, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4).

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northern Negev also continued, with IDF intelligence attributing much of it to worsening economic conditions in the Strip.[133]

The IDF was unable to contain the infiltrators.[134] There were, it is true, occasional, pinprick IDF retaliatory raids into the Strip: in February 1954 an Egyptian soldier and a policeman were killed in an IDF raid on the outskirts of Gaza, and an Arab shepherdess was murdered and her flock stolen.[135] But such actions were of little avail. The northern Negev regional councils appealed for more settlement guards, complaining that the situation was going 'from bad to worse'; there was a wave of departures, 'which weakens . . . the settlements and endangers the whole Negev'.[136] Infiltrators who had earlier dared to strike only at night and in poorly guarded areas now pillaged by day and close to the settlements.[137] The depredations culminated on 25 March with the kidnapping by Egyptian troops of an Israeli soldier.[138]

The IDF responded on the night of 2/3 April 1954 in *Mivtza Sigaria 1* (Operation Cigarette 1), attacking an Egyptian outpost east of Gaza and ambushing reinforcements, killing two Egyptians and capturing a third. A separate IDF ambush near Rafah left one Palestinian National Guardsman dead and a second captured.

The Egyptian military struck back with a short, concentrated infiltrator campaign—in retrospect, the first of the Fedayeen raids—by six separate teams, organized by Egyptian military intelligence in Gaza.[139] On the night of 8-9 April infiltrators threw grenades at houses in Moshav Shuva and fired automatic weapons and threw grenades at two Israeli vehicles on a road three and a half kilometres from Shuva, wounding two IDF soldiers. A similar attack on an IDF truck near Kibbutz Be`eri killed one soldier and injured three. A fourth attack was carried out by infiltrators that night on an Israeli civilian vehicle near Moshav Carmiyah. In every case, tracks

[133] 'The Infiltration into Israel', undated, unsigned (but by IDF Intelligence Branch), 20 Jan. 1954, ISA FM 2402/12; and 'List of Incidents on the Gaza Strip Border and in the Demilitarized Zone at Nitzana—3 Feb.-20 Feb. 1954', unsigned and undated, ISA FM 2439/1.

[134] As Lavon put it: 'So long as the refugees are penned up in the Strip, their depredations cannot be stopped' (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 465, entry for 16 Apr. 1954).

[135] 'Israeli Operations against Egypt', unsigned memo. from early 1955, ISA FM 2439/2.

[136] Chairmen of the regional councils (H. Isaacowitz, M. Castro, Y. Shimshon, A. Roseman, and A. Efrat) to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, 7 Mar. 1954, Sha`ar HaNegev Regional Council Archive.

[137] Efrat, chairman of the Sha`ar HaNegev Regional Council, in the name of the other northern Negev regional councils, to the Interior Ministry Commissioner for the Southern District, 28 Mar. 1954, Sha`ar HaNegev Regional Council Archive.

[138] A few months earlier, on 8 Nov. 1953, Egyptian border guards had lured two Israeli soldiers near Nahal-Oz into a conversation and then opened fire, killing one and wounding the other (Lt.-Col. W. T. McAninch (Jerusalem) to A. Cordier (New York), 9 Nov. 1953, UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0-1).

[139] Wallach and Lissak (eds.) (*Atlas*, 120) misdate the first raids organized by Egyptian military intelligence in the Gaza Strip to 'the end of 1954'.

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led from and back to the Gaza Strip. Most of the raiders had worn boots, though some—apparently the guides—had been barefoot. One of the raiders was killed and identified by IDF intelligence as Jaber al Nabahin, 'a veteran Egyptian intelligence scout'.[140]

Dayan, declaring that the Egyptians were becoming 'more and more uppity', called for an energetic response,[141] his sentiments being, for a rare change, echoed in the upper reaches of the Foreign Ministry.[142] During the summer, Egyptian and Egyptian-Palestinian troops along the armistice line repeatedly opened fire on Israeli patrols (which, so the Egyptians complained, moved too close to the border). On the night of 7-8 July Egyptian intelligence scouts mined an IDF patrol road near Kibbutz Kissufim. The mine injured three Israeli soldiers the following morning, triggering *Mivtza Ayin-Tahat-Ayin* (Operation Eye-for-an-Eye). On the night of 10-11 July a company-sized force of paratroopers, led by Sharon, stormed and captured Position 79, opposite Kissufim, killing nine or ten Palestinian gendarmes, wounding several more, and taking two prisoner. The attack did not go smoothly. A *fellah* sleeping along the Israeli force's approach route had been awakened and started shouting, denying Sharon's men the advantage of surprise. The Israelis suffered one dead and five wounded (including Sharon, who was hit in the leg) before the defenders were overpowered.[143] According to Israeli intelligence, the commander of Position 79 had known of the mine-planting operation three nights earlier.

Predictably, the raid angered the Egyptian military. But, despite calls for retaliation, the Egyptian leadership refused to 'deviate in the slightest from the[ir] policy of restraint'.[144] Israel demanded that Egypt replace the Palestinian troops along the line with (perhaps better disciplined) Egyptians. The Egyptians promised to curb firing on IDF patrols and to curtail infiltration.[145]

But the infiltrations continued. On the night of 11/12 August a three- or four-man squad of Egyptian military intelligence scouts from Gaza blew up the main water pipeline to the northern Negev near Kibbutz Nir-Am.

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[140] 'IDF Spokesman's Announcement (14)', 11 Apr. 1954, ISA FM 2439/1; UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-94; Russell to SecState, 9 Apr. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 3; Har-Even, in the name of DMI, to Eilan, FM 'The Activities of Egyptian Intelligence', 23 Dec. 1954, ISA FM 2436/7 aleph; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 431, 446, entries for 3 and 9 Apr. 1954; Sharett at Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 13 Apr. 1954, CZA S100-92.

[141] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 477, entry for 23 Apr. 1954.

[142] 'Summary of a Consultation Chaired by the Foreign Minister on 23 Apr. 1954', 26 Apr. 1954, unsigned, ISA FM 2436/7 bet. G. Rafael, Sharett's Middle East affairs adviser, proposed that Israel unleash an air assault in retaliation.

[143] US Embassy (Cairo) to SecState, 13 July 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 1; 'The Activities of Egyptian Intelligence', Capt. Har-Even, in the name of DMI, to A. Eilan, 23 Dec. 1954, ISA FM 2436/7 aleph; Har-Zion, *Pirkei Yornan*, 196-8.

[144] J. Caffery (Cairo) to State Dept., 13 July 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 1.

[145] Lt.-Col. A. Shalev, IDF General Staff officer for MACs, to DMI, etc., 25 July 1954, ISA FM 2438/6.

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An IDF reprisal on 14 August (*Mivtza Mayim* 2 (Operation Water 2)) destroyed the waterworks just north of Gaza. On 7 September an Egyptian squad crossed the border and again blew up the pipeline near Nir-Am; and it was hit once again on 25 October, near Kibbutz Mefalsim.[146]

On 4-5 September murder was added to sabotage when an Israeli tractor driver was murdered near Kibbutz Ruhama by a two-man Egyptian intelligence squad, which had been spying on IDF manœuvres in the Negev and was on its way back to the Strip.[147] A similar attack, in which an Israeli tractor driver was injured, took place on 20 September near Gan Giv`ati. Four hours later an Egyptian intelligence reconnaissance team, which included Yunis Mubarak, one of the perpetrators of the Ruhama murder, blew up a house in Moshav Hatzav.[148] On 25 September '5 well-armed, well-trained men wearing rubber soled shoes' ambushed four Israelis in a milk truck on the Ashkelon-Beit Shikma road, killing two and wounding the others. The EIMAC condemned Egypt. This raid, too, was probably the work of an Egyptian military intelligence squad.[149]

Some of the information on these raids was gleaned by Israeli intelligence from Hussein Hassan Faraj al `Abid (known as *HaKushi* (the black man)), a 21-year-old Egyptian intelligence scout captured north of the Gaza Strip on 29 September. He had participated in the attacks at Gan Giv`ati and Hatzav. A former fisherman and vegetable hawker from Gaza, he had

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[146] 'The Activities of Egyptian Intelligence', Har-Even, in the name of DMI, to Eilan, FM, 23 Dec. 1954, ISA FM 2436/7 aleph; 'Israel-Egypt Relations', unsigned and undated memo. from early 1955, ISA FM 2436/7 aleph. The sabotage of the pipeline near Mefalsim was, according to IDF intelligence, the work of Hassan al Hashum, Muhammed Damiat, and Salman Muhammad A'id, who were 'sent by the Muslim Brotherhood' ('The Blowing Up of the Water Pipeline near Mefalsim', unsigned and undated IDF intelligence memo., ISA FM 2952/3).

[147] 'The Murder near Kibbutz Ruhama on 4 Sept. 1954', unsigned and undated intelligence memo., ISA FM 2952/3, stating: 'Kat"am [IDF intelligence special duties officer] informs: "The murder was carried out by Yunis Mubarak who is employed as a scout by the Egyptian intelligence service. [The identity of] the second [perpetrator] is not yet known"'; 'The Activities of Egyptian Intelligence', ISA FM 2436/7 aleph; 'Case No. 25—Egyptian Appeal', 13 Sept. 1954, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-94.

[148] 'The Activities of Egyptian Intelligence', ISA FM 2436/7 aleph.

[149] 'Case No. 31', 20 Oct. 1954, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-94; Russell to SecState, 27 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4. September also saw a spate of raids further to the south, directed against Israeli bedouin, probably the work of Sinai-based Egyptian bedouin. But they may also have been directed or ordered by Egyptian military intelligence. On 5 Sept. one Israeli bedouin was killed, two were wounded, and seventeen sheep were stolen near Shivta (Russell to SecState, 6 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4). On 24 Sept., in a raid on a bedouin encampment near Nevatim, in the Negev, ten camels were stolen (Russell to SecState, 27 Sept. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4). On the night of 29/30 Oct., Tarrabin tribesmen from the Gaza Strip attacked an Israeli bedouin encampment of the Abu Assah tribe, wounding three and stealing 150 camels, 200 sheep, and four mules. Three of the attackers died and one was wounded and captured. In a further attack that day, some eighty Tarrabin and `Azazme tribesmen stole sixty-four sheep and seventy-five camels from Israeli `Azazme in the DMZ around Nitzana ('Attempted Murder and Armed Robbery against the Abu Assah Tribe', Israel Police Special Branch, undated, ISA FM 2952/3).

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been recruited and coerced by Major Mustafa Hafez, the head of Egyptian military intelligence in Gaza, on pain of being jailed and deprived of rations. He claimed not to have known the objective of the mission and said he had been promised one Egyptian pound.[150]

The deterioration along the Gaza-Israel frontier that autumn worried Israeli officials. Sharett was said to be 'upset and anxious', and unsure of how long he could 'restrain' the Activists.[151] At the end of September, Dayan proposed a major retaliatory raid against an Egyptian government building inside Gaza city. If Israel failed to strike, claimed Dayan, growing infiltration would lead to 'a complete collapse in the [border] settlements'. A major reprisal would persuade Cairo to curb the infiltration, especially since Egyptian intelligence was behind some of it.

Opposing the idea, Sharett argued that it would probably result in excessive casualties.[152] At the same time, he told the new British ambassador, Jack Nicholls, that Israel 'had considerable evidence that the operations were centrally directed by an Egyptian military intelligence organization' and that he believed the Egyptians wanted to provoke a major IDF reprisal (thus 'effacing Egypt's own transgressions'). Pressed by Nicholls, Sharett conceded that 'the Egyptian Government as such' might not be 'organizing the incidents'. But clearly they were being directed by 'a branch of the Egyptian Intelligence Service'. Israeli restraint had failed: 'It was politically impossible for the Israel Government to remain passive indefinitely when they could not guarantee . . . elementary rights to security of life and property.' Nicholls, calling Sharett's 'difficulties' 'very real', asked Whitehall to press Cairo to curb the border attacks.[153]

The Lavon Affair (Ha`Essek HaBish), July 1954-January 1955

The growing deterioration along the southern frontier was played out against the backdrop of the gradual start of the crisis in Israeli-Egyptian relations which was to culminate in the Sinai Campaign. The crisis was triggered by several events, the first of which was the activation and capture in Cairo and Alexandria, on 23-4 July 1954, of an Israeli-run sabotage and espionage network of about a dozen local Jewish activists. The network had been set up in 1951 by John Darling, the codename of

[150] 'Investigation of Israeli Complaint No. 1-125-54, dated 22 Nov. 1954, carried out on 3 Dec. 1954', Maj. Rosenius (Swedish army), UN observer, to chairman EIMAC, 4 Dec. 1954, ISA FM 2436/7 aleph.

[151] Russell to SecState, 1 Oct. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4.

[152] Sharett to Elath (London), Eban and Shiloah (Washington), 26 Oct. 1954, in Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 591-2.

[153] Nicholls to FO and Whitehall Distribution, 4 Nov. 1954, PRO FO 371-11106/VR 1091/245; Nicholls to Falla, 5 Nov. 1954, PRO FO 371-111107 VR1091/251.

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Major Avraham Dar of Unit 131 of IDF intelligence. In spring 1954 IDF intelligence awakened the 'sleepers' in order to stymie the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian agreement on British withdrawal from the Canal Zone. As seen from Jerusalem, the withdrawal would remove what amounted to a British military 'buffer' between the two countries, thus opening the way to a possible Egyptian offensive against the Negev.

The Jewish operatives were ordered to plant bombs in British and American facilities in Cairo and Alexandria with the aim of creating bad blood between Egypt and the West. Small, relatively harmless bombs began going off on 2 July. On 14 July bombs exploded in the US cultural centres in Cairo and Alexandria. A week later, a series of bombs exploded in strategic and public targets in both cities. There had been no fatalities. Then a bomb went off prematurely in the pocket of ring member Philip. Natanson. Within hours of his arrest, the whole group was rounded up.[154]

Within weeks, two of the prisoners were dead—Yosef Cremona, of the Cairo cell, who, according to Israeli intelligence, had been tortured to death, and Major Max Binnet, an Israeli Unit 131 officer who had been working independently as a spy in Cairo and had had contact with the sabotage network. He had committed suicide. Another network member, Marcel Ninio, tried to commit suicide by jumping out of a window during interrogation, but survived, despite being seriously injured.[155] The deaths badly upset the Israeli authorities, though officially Jerusalem continued to dissociate itself from the affair. But, human tragedies aside, the operation had failed. On 27 July 1954 Britain and Egypt initialled the agreement on British withdrawal from the Canal Zone. It was formally signed on 19 October, and, in compliance with its provisions, the last British troops left Egypt in June 1956.[156]

Sharett, the prime minister, knew nothing of the operation, either before the network was activated or after its capture. For more than two months, the defence chiefs—Lavon, Dayan, Givli—kept him in the dark. Only in early October, after Cairo Radio had announced the capture and impending trial of the ring, was Sharett informed. He was furious.[157]

The trial of the sabotage network opened in Cairo in December 1954. Throughout December 1954-January 1955, the Israeli leadership's thinking on Israeli-Egyptian relations was overshadowed by the trial and fears for the fate of the defendants (which were reinforced, among some of the officials, by a sense of guilt). The British ambassador in Tel Aviv,

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[154] Black and Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars*, 107-16.

[155] Col. Givli to director of Mossad, etc., 1 Nov. 1954, ISA FM 2387/7; Murray (Cairo) to FO, 28 Dec. 1954, PRO FO 371-108548/JE 1571/22; *HaAretz*, articles on 18 Mar. 1975, 23 Apr. 1980, and 1 Jan. 1988.

[156] W. R. Louis, 'The Tragedy of the Anglo-Egyptian Settlement of 1954', in Louis and Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956*, 43-71; Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez, Diaries 1951-56*, 215-41.

[157] Rafael, *Destination Peace*, 37.

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Nicholls, put it succinctly: 'Should any of the accused be sentenced to death, feeling here might well become so violent that it would endanger Mr Sharett's present policy of moderation towards the Arab states.' He recommended that Britain intercede, despite the possible charge of interference in Egyptian internal affairs, to prevent death sentences. (The Foreign Office did so repeatedly.)[158]

On 4 January 1955 Sharett noted in his diary: 'I passed the day in dread of the sentence.'[159] Israel invoked contacts around the world to intercede with Cairo.[160] The DMI, Colonel Binyamin Givli, proposed to Mossad director Isser Harel that Israel take Egyptian hostages, both in the Gaza Strip and 'in Cyprus and Europe', and attack the Egyptian Embassy in Amman if death sentences were passed.[161]

By mid-January 1955 Israel was reasonably confident that Nasser would avoid death sentences. The Egyptian had explicitly promised a go-between, probably the British MP Dr Maurice Orbach, that there would be no capital sentences. An emissary of Nasser's, `Abd al Rahman Sadiq, who met Israeli officials in Paris in November 1954, repeated the same message. In late January 1955 Nasser assured Roger Baldwin, of the International Human Rights Commission, that the sentences would be 'moderate'.[162]

But on 27 January Cairo announced that two of the men, Moshe Marzouk and Shmuel Azar, had been condemned to death. The rest, save for two who were acquitted, were given stiff prison sentences. Marzouk and Azar were executed on 31 January, after Nasser had confirmed the sentences. 'Nasser has cheated us,' Gideon Rafael told Sharett. But Sharett felt that Nasser had simply been unable to overcome the objections of the more extreme RCC members.[163]

Whatever the truth, the implementation of the death sentences had a

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[158] Nicholls to Eden, 14 Dec. 1954, and FO to British Embassy, Cairo, 24 Jan. 1955, both in PRO FO 371-111127 VR1691/2; 'Political Summary for the Period Jan. 26 to Feb. 9, 1955', British Embassy (Cairo) to FO, 10 Feb. 1955, PRO FO 371-113576 JE1013/7; 'Trial of Jews in Egypt', S(?). E. Millard (Milland?), 28 Jan. 1955, PRO FO 371-113764 JE1571/15.

[159] Sharett, *Yornan lshi*, iii. 624, entry for 4 Jan. 1955.

[160] e.g. Givli to defence minister, etc., ? Oct. 1954, and Givli to defence minister, etc., 27 Oct. 1954, both in ISA FM 2387/7.

[161] Sharett, *Yornan Ishi*, iii. 654, entry for 14 Jan. 1955. Sharett called the proposed attack on the embassy 'a mad plan'.

[162] Rafael to Shiloah (Washington), 1 Feb. 1955, ISA Shiloah Papers, 4374/22; Shamir, 'The Collapse of Project Alpha', 77; protocol of Mapai Political Committee meeting, statement by Sharett, 27 Jan. 1955, LPA 55/26.

[163] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 690, entry for 27 Jan. 1955. Weeks later, Israeli officials were still uncertain about what had happened: had Nasser maliciously cheated them? had he been sincere, but forced to bow to the majority view on the RCC? had the internal situation in Egypt influenced matters? (see Rafael to Shiloah, 1 Feb. 1955, ISA Shiloah Papers 4374/22). One explanation offered was that Nasser had had no choice because, during the previous months, Egypt had executed a number of Muslim Brotherhood members convicted of terrorism. How could Nasser then justify not executing convicted Jewish saboteurs?

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profound effect on Israeli-Egyptian relations, abruptly ending the flurry of Egyptian-Israeli peace contacts initiated by Nasser at the end of November 1954. In a verbal message to Sharett conveyed by a go-between, Nasser had spoken of a peaceful resolution of outstanding bilateral problems, including Israeli passage through the Canal and the Straits of Tiran.[164]

Nasser apparently respected Sharett and had referred to him as 'an honest and moderate man'.[165] An exchange of messages between the two followed. Israel made progress in bilateral relations conditional on the passage of Israeli shipping through the waterways and on moderate sentences in the Cairo trial.[166] In January 1955 Nasser agreed to meet in Cairo with a secret Israeli emissary, former IDF CGS Yigael Yadin. The Cairo sentences abruptly ended all this.[167]

It was almost immediately clear to all observers that Israel would take reprisals.[168] The executions were a 'very real shock to Israeli public opinion', reported the British Embassy in Tel Aviv. Israeli media censorship ensured that the public did not really know what the Jewish ring had done or that it was an official Israeli operation. 'To the excitable Israeli mind [the Cairo executions] proved the irreconcilable hostility of the Arab States', reinforcing 'the average Israeli's conviction that the world was in league against him'.[169]

Sharett execrated the executions at dramatic meetings of the Knesset plenum and its Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee. The Moderates in Jerusalem quickly understood that 'the enmity will increase, the tension will expand . . . and one may assume that the period of our restraint . . . will also come to an end with the first opportunity [presented by] Egyptian attack'.[170] The Cairo hangings, asserted Walter Eytan, had 'set back' the possibility of an Israeli-Egyptian 'accommodation' by years.[171]

The executions had also undermined Sharett and the Moderate line and the British ambassador's assessment was that 'Sharett would find it very difficult to resist demands for reprisals if there were any further incursions from Gaza resulting in Israeli death'. The Foreign Office, he urged, should press Egypt to reinforce control over the Gaza border to prevent such incursions.[172]

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[164] Rafael to Shiloah, 1 Feb. 1955, ISA Shiloah Papers 4374/22.

[165] Nicholls to Shuckburgh, 14 Dec. 1954, PRO FO 371-111197 VR1091/268.

[166] Rafael (*Destination Peace*, 38-9) reproduces Sharett to Nasser of 21 Dec. 1954 and Nasser (though unsigned) to Sharett of 31 Dec. 1954.

[167] Shamir, 'The Collapse of Project Alpha', 79.

[168] 'Trial of Jews in Egypt', PRO FO 371-113764 JE1571/15.

[169] British Embassy to S. Lloyd, 20 Feb. 1956, PRO FO 371-121692 R1011/1.

[170] Rafael to Shiloah, 1 Feb. 1955, ISA Shiloah Papers, 4374/22.

[171] Nicholls to FO, 1 Feb. 1955, PRO FO 371-115837.

[172] Nicholls to Shuckburgh, 8 Feb. 1955, PRO FO 371-115896 VR1092/14.

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Throughout the 1950s Arab leaders failed to appreciate Israel's extreme sensitivity to casualties. And the Cairo executions were far worse than the killing of Israelis by infiltrators. The Egyptians appear to have understood this, at least belatedly, after the event, for they immediately clamped down on all infiltration from the Gaza Strip. 'Nasser understands that it is best not to provoke us at this time . . .', recorded Sharett.[173]

Bat-Galim

Well before the executions, Israel had embarked on another venture designed, at least, to embarrass Egypt and, at best, to derail the British withdrawal from the Canal Zone. In April 1954, as the Anglo-Egyptian talks proceeded, Israel decided, in principle, to send an Israeli merchant ship through either the Canal or the Straits of Tiran, both of which Egypt had closed to Israeli shipping. The initiative was either Dayan's or Lavon's.[174] The move was designed to test the Egyptians. If they violated international maritime practice and law, Israel could justifiably press Britain to reconsider its withdrawal from the Canal, for who knew how Egypt might abuse its powers once it was in full control of the waterway. In any event, blocking the ship's passage would lead to international condemnation of Egypt (as indeed occurred) and win Israel points in the diplomatic arena.[175]

As preparations for the operation, run by the IDF, neared completion, Sharett became increasingly unhappy. It appears that he tried to halt it, but eventually submitted to the Activist majority in the Cabinet. Initially, the ship, the *Bat-Galim*, was to have proceeded north from Africa through

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[173] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 715, entry for 10 Feb. 1955.

[174] Ibid. ii. 479, entry for 28 Apr. 1954. The Canal was firmly closed to Israeli shipping between 1948 and 1956, and often closed to Israeli goods carried on third-country ships. The situation at the Straits of Titan was more problematic. Egypt had occupied the two islands at the entrance to the straits, Tiran and Snapir (Sanafir), in Jan. 1950, and had declared that the Gulf of Aqaba (Gulf of Eilat) was an 'Arab sea' and that the straits were Egyptian 'territorial waters'. Egypt did not yet formally question freedom of passage to other-country vessels through the straits. But early in 1951 Egypt issued regulations requiring that vessels intending to pass through the straits give Egypt prior notice and agree to submit to inspection. In effect, Israeli shipping was barred from going through the straits. Egypt placed a number of large shore guns at Ras Nasrani, overlooking the straits, to enforce its policy. Implementation of this prior notice and inspection regulations was spotty. Israel only completed the construction of its port in Eilat in June 1952, and the port was able to take ocean-going vessels only from March 1956. Very few Israeli vessels actually went through the straits between 1948 and 1956 (see C. F. Salans, 'Gulf of Aqaba and Strait of Titan: Troubled Waters', in J. N. Moore (ed.), *The Arab-Israeli Conflict.' Readings and Documents* (Princeton, NJ, 1977), 185-97).

[175] The dispatch of the *Bat-Galim* is one of the items in an Israeli intelligence document, probably produced by the Foreign Ministry Research Dept., entitled 'Israeli Initiated Actions against Egypt' (*pe'ulot yezumot Yisraeliyot neged Mitzraim*), ISA FM 2439/2.

the straits. Sharett objected. Lavon agreed to change the objective to the Canal, a shift that Sharett accepted as 'the lesser evil'. The original sailing date was postponed because of Sharett's fear that the operation might subvert an impending Israeli request for American arms.[176]

Despite *de facto* British military control of the Canal, Egypt had blocked the waterway to Israeli shipping and Israeli goods carried on third-country vessels since the state's establishment. Israel maintained that the Israel—Egypt armistice accord had ended the state of war and that closing the Canal to its shipping and goods was a hostile act, in violation of international law. The UN Security Council upheld this view in Resolution No. 95 (1 September 1951), which deemed the blockade illegal and called on Egypt to open the Canal to Israeli shipping. Egypt never obeyed, although the weight of international law and opinion, as embodied in the Security Council resolution, favoured Israel.[177]

The *Bat-Galim* finally set sail from the Eritrean port of Massawa for Haifa in the last week of September. On 28 September 1954 Egyptian authorities at Port Tewfik impounded the ship and its cargo of tinned beef, condensed milk, and plywood. The British Embassy in Tel Aviv reported that the *Bat-Galim* 'had been deliberately exposed to seizure in the hope of extorting from the Security Council an effective ruling against Egypt'.[178]

The Egyptians regarded the ship as an embarrassment and a provocation. Their charge that the Israeli crew members had fired upon an Egyptian fishing vessel, killing two fishermen, was obvious nonsense, and was quickly forgotten. The ten Israeli crewmen were tortured for two days, and then imprisoned until 1 January 1955, when they were released. Their personal belongings and the ship's $400 kitty were never returned, and the ship itself was impounded.[179]

After September 1954 there was a general lull along the Israeli-Gaza border. Foreign observers and Israeli officials reported 'a noticeable falling-off of infiltration' into Israel from the Strip (and Jordan). IDF Intelligence Branch wrote:

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[176] Dayan, *Avnei*, 132-3.

[177] For the legal position regarding Egypt and Israeli passage through the Canal in the years 1949-56, see M. Khadduri, 'Closure of the Suez Canal to Israeli Shipping', and D. H. N. Johnson, 'Some Legal Problems of International Waterways with Particular Reference to the Straits of Tiran and the Suez Canal', both in Moore (ed.), *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Readings and Documents*, 210-20 and 198-209 respectively. The relevant Security Council resolution appears on pp. 994-5.

[178] British Embassy to Lloyd, 20 Feb. 1955, PRO FO 371-121692 R1011/1.

[179] 'Egypt-Israel Relations, Background Note #21', Israel Embassy (Washington DC), Mar. 1955, ISA FM 2439/6; 'Israel-Egypt Relations', unsigned and undated memo., from early 1955, probably written by Israel Foreign Ministry officials, ISA FM 2436/7 aleph.

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> The second half of 1954 and the beginning of 1955 were characterized by relative quiet along the [Gaza] armistice line, especially following the actions taken by the Egyptians to thwart infiltration and restrain the elements bothering the Egyptian administration (Muslim Brotherhood and the [ex-]Mufti's men). Regular Egyptian forces generally refrained from involvement in serious dashes with our forces.[180]

Raids directed by Egyptian military intelligence ceased, with the possible exception of the raid on 1 November 1954 by a squad of three bedouin, who blew up two houses in Moshav Patish before withdrawing back to the Strip. There were no casualties.[181] The Egyptians maintained that they were doing all they could to prevent infiltration, and were severely punishing infiltrators caught on the way back.[182] Three months later there were two more serious raids. But they appear to have been locally initiated, not state-directed. On 21 January 1955 a twelve-man Egyptian unit attacked an IDF observation post, killing one soldier and wounding two.[183] And on the night of 24/5 January 1955 four Palestinians ambushed two Israeli tractor drivers near Kibbutz 'Ein HaShlosha, killing one, Haim Ben-Moshe Alkabas, and wounding the other. Two of the raiders were later killed by Israeli troops.[184]

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[180] Nicholls to Eden, 8 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115898 R1092/78; untitled memo. by A. Nutting, 2 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115897 VR1092/49; 'Special Report: The Gaza Incident—Summary and Situation Assessment', IDF Intelligence Branch, 22 Mar. 1955, ISA FM 2454/ 5. See also Sharett's speech in the Knesset, 17 Jan. 1955, in which he said that there has been a general improvement in the border situation.

[181] 'Attempted Murder—Blowing Up of Houses in Moshav Patish', unsigned and undated, ISA FM 2952/3.

[182] Maj. A. Rabkin to DMI, etc., 28 Nov. 1954, ISA FM 2436/7 aleph.

[183] 'Israel-Egypt Relations', ISA FM 2436/7 aleph.

[184] 'Murder and Attempted Murder at Kibbutz 'Ein HaShlosha', Israel Police Special Branch, undated, ISA FM 2952/3. Some Israeli and Western historians have claimed that the last months of 1954 and the early months of 1955, before the 28 Feb. 1955 Gaza Raid, were marked by a major upsurge in Egyptian-Israeli border hostilities. They claim that these hostilities were a policy initiative of the Egyptian government following the conclusion (July-Oct. 1954) of the Anglo-Egyptian Suez Canal agreement. Their argument runs thus: Nasser had successfully concluded the anti-British struggle and was now free to turn to the Palestine question. The struggle against Western efforts to set up a 'Northern Tier' alliance, culminating in the Baghdad Pact, had led to Nasser's alienation from the West and driven him into Soviet arms. Historians such as Uri Ra'anan (*The USSR Arms the Third World, passim*) and Mordechai Bar-On (*Sha`arei `Aza*, 35) have further claimed that this anti-Israeli, anti-Western policy resulted, among other things, in the Czech arms deal. Hence, it was not the Gaza Raid which had prompted and triggered the Czech arms deal but the general, belligerent policy towards Israel and the West launched during the second half of 1954. But this description does not conform with the fact of what happened along the Israeli-Egyptian frontier during 1954 and the first two months of 1955. If there is a single point at which border relations began to deteriorate, it was Mar.-Apr. 1954—months *before* the conclusion of the Anglo-Egyptian agreement. There was a further upsurge of hostilities during July-Sept., but these *preceded* the final signing of the agreement in Oct. And the months Oct. 1954—Jan. 1955, which should have seen a major upsurge in belligerence according to these historians, were unusually quiet. Moreover, Israeli police statistics for 1953 and 1954—the only relatively systematic and comprehensive figures—indicate no increase in infiltration or terrorism in 1954 as compared with 1953, or in the second half of 1954 and Jan-Feb. 1955 as compared with the previous six months. If anything, the incidence of

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infiltration along the Egyptian-Israeli frontier remained fairly steady through 1954-Feb. 1955. There were 154 recorded cases in May 1954, 116 in June, 123 in July, 152 in Aug., 108 in Sept., 201 in Oct., 76 in Nov., 107 in Dec., 165 in Jan., and 159 in Feb. There was a steady decline in infiltrators captured between May 1954 and February 1955. Attacks by infiltrators and Arab soldiers resulted in 4 Israeli dead along all the borders in May 1954, 8 in June, 4 in July, 2 in Aug., 8 in Sept., 1 in Oct., none in Nov., 1 in Dec., 4 in Jan. 1955, and 5 in Feb. A similar graph can be drawn for Israelis wounded (the figures are drawn from Israel Police Special Branch monthly reports on infiltration for 1954 and 1955, CZA S92-11). Lastly, 66 Israelis were killed in Arab attacks in 1953 and 55 in 1954. Of these, in 1953 33 and in 1954 27 of the dead were killed by infiltrators ('Infiltration—A Survey of the Problems of Infiltration into Israel—1954', M. Novick, Israel Police Special Branch, June 1955, CZA S92-11). Of course, all this in no way contradicts the fact that 1954 did see the start of occasional Egyptian-run cross-border guerrilla/terrorist operations. But there appears to be no chronological correlation between these attacks and the end of Egypt's struggle with Britain over the Canal. The attacks *began before* the July-Oct. agreement, and fell off sharply *after* Oct., when, according to Bar-On and Ra`anan, they should have increased.

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11
The Gaza Raid and After

The Raid, February 1955

For three weeks after the execution of Marzouk and Azar there was an ominous silence along the lines. The director general of the Prime Minister's Office, Teddy Kollek, 'warned' officials at the Foreign Ministry that 'the IDF was . . . determined to get revenge for the hanging[s] . . . the suicide of [the] two others and . . . Egypt's action in the *Bat-Galim* case'.[1] Then the inevitable occurred. A squad (or two squads) sent by Egyptian military intelligence broke into a military facility in Rishon LeZion, south of Tel Aviv, on 23 February 1955 and stole maps and documents. They also appear to have stolen food, a heater, and a telephone from an office in nearby Ness Ziona. Two days later they shot dead an Israeli bicyclist near Rehovot, fifteen kilometres south-east of Tel Aviv.[2]

The raids, said Sharett, were an 'impertinence the like of which we have never known'.[3] But IDF intelligence believed they were 'apparently' due to 'fear that Israel would exploit the inter-Arab crisis to square accounts. . . It is not inconceivable that the Egyptian intelligence scouts carried out the murder . . . on their own initiative and incidentally to their routine work [of reconnaissance]'.[4] Some of the marauders were intercepted on their way back to Gaza. One man was killed, and a report on IDF traffic along roads south of Tel Aviv was found in his pocket.[5]

Sharett was in no doubt that Ben-Gurion, now back at the Defence

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[1] I. B. White, US Embassy, Tel Aviv, to ambassador, 18 May 1955, NA RG 59, 684a.86/ 5-2055, Box 2691. Kollek told White that he had tried to get the FM officials to pressure the defence establishment to 'minimize the size of its [prospective] retaliation'. According to Kollek, FM staff 'were the group most removed from understanding the emotions and thinking of the Israel public and the Israel Defence Force[s]'. A good analysis of the linkage between the 'Essek HaBish, *Bat-Galim*, the secret Israeli-Egyptian contacts, the Cairo hangings, and the Gaza Raid is to be found in 'Report on the Activities, Plans and Possibilities of Action of the Bureau of the Adviser on Middle East Affairs and Political Matters at the United Nations', G. Rafael to foreign minister, 14 June 1955, ISA FM 2446/1.

[2] Capt. P. Huc (Belgian army) to chairman, Egypt-Israel MAC, 25 Feb. 1955, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-94; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 799, entry for 27 Feb. 1955.

[3] Ibid. iii. 797, entry for 26 Feb. 1955.

[4] 'Special Report: The Gaza Incident—Summary and Situation Assessment', IDF Intelligence Branch, 22 Mar. 1955, ISA FM 2454/5.

[5] 'Israel-Egypt Relations,' unsigned and undated, FM, ISA FM 2436/7 aleph.

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Ministry, would 'demand a reprisal'.[6] The former premier had replaced Lavon on 20-1 February, after the latter had been forced to resign over the Cairo sabotage affair. During the last months of 1954 and January 1955 Sharett had had a relatively easy time imposing the Moderate line, after Lavon had been greatly weakened by the fall of the Egyptian network and suspicions about his own part in the affair. Ben-Gurion's return to the Cabinet immediately tilted the balance in favour of the Activists. Ben-Gurion had signalled his intentions. On 20 February, after spending the morning with Dayan, Ben-Gurion had told Sharett that 'security comes first [but we] must constantly strive after peace'. Then he added that 'he supported . . . the method of retaliation though not in every case'—which Sharett interpreted to mean that 'security comes first and acts of retaliation are permitted even if they push back the possibility of peace'.[7]

The IDF high command enthusiastically welcomed Ben-Gurion's return. IDF intelligence maintained that Egypt expected Ben-Gurion's return to end Israel's (relative) restraint. It was the resulting Egyptian nervousness that apparently accounted for their stepped-up intelligence-gathering probes into Israel.[8]

Sharett and the Egyptians were right. On 27 February Ben-Gurion and Dayan appeared in Sharett's office, proposing a retaliatory strike against an Egyptian army camp on the outskirts of Gaza city. Dayan, saying the IDF would send in two companies, predicted '10' Egyptian casualties. Ben-Gurion stressed that the objective would be to destroy buildings, not kill Egyptians; if they ran away, perhaps they would suffer no casualties, he said. Sharett acquiesced, while cautioning against extensive bloodshed; Ben-Gurion was reassuring.[9]

The raid, codenamed *Mivtza Hetz Shahor* (Operation Black Arrow), was to be the bloodiest carried out by Israel against Egypt since the 1948 war, and severely shook Egypt and, ultimately, the entire Middle East. The primary target was a small Egyptian army camp, housing two infantry platoons, one kilometre north of Gaza city. The nearby railway station, to the south-west, and the water-pumping station to the east were secondary

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[6] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 797, entry for 26 Feb. 1955.

[7] Ibid. iii. 742, entry for 20 Feb. 1955.

[8] See the perceptive analysis of the changeover at the Defence Ministry, and its connection to the Gaza Raid, in J. Nicholls to Eden, 8 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115898 R1092/78. See also 'BMEO Weekly Political Summary No. 10 for Week Ending Mar. 9, 1955', PRO FO 371-115461 V1013/13; 'Special Report: The Gaza Incident', ISA FM 2454/5.

[9] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 799-800, entry for 27 Feb. 1955; Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 3 Mar. 1955, BGA. Sharett was later to reproach himself for failing to go into sufficient detail about the raid (*Yoman Ishi*, iii. 854-5, entry for 22 Mar.). Dayan had used the projected figure of '10' Egyptian dead once before, when proposing a large-scale reprisal in Gaza back in Sept. 1954. In rejecting Dayan's proposal, Sharett at the time had argued that there was no way of ensuring that there would be no more than '10' Egyptian dead (Sharett to Elath, Eban, and Shiloah, 26 Oct. 1954, in Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 591-6).

objectives. During the raid, a small IDF force took up positions south of Gaza city, on the Khan Yunis-Gaza road near Wadi Aza, to block reinforcements. About 120 paratroopers, mostly officers and NCOs, took part, with orders to blow up the camp's buildings and tents. Enemy soldiers were to be harmed only if they interfered.

The raid went in on the night of 28 February/1 March. A four-man Egyptian ambush encountered the raiders some three kilometres east of the target. In the short firefight that ensued, two Egyptians were killed and another wounded. But the alarm was up and the element of surprise lost. Sharon, the commanding officer, decided to press on. Then a faulty map caused the troops to confuse the pumping station with the army camp. But, after a sharp firefight, the paratroopers overcame the Egyptians and occupied both the pumping station and the camp. The secondary force failed to blow up the railway station.

The paratroopers then withdrew, carrying their dead and injured on stretchers and makeshift slings. They were repeatedly harassed on their way back to the border by Egyptian fire, suffering additional casualties. Dayan, waiting at Kibbutz Kfar `Aza, was shaken by the Israeli losses, eight dead and thirteen wounded.[10] The Egyptians in the camp, the pumping station, and the railway station had suffered fourteen soldiers killed and fifteen wounded. A 7-year-old Palestinian boy and an adult were also killed, and two were wounded.

Meanwhile, the IDF blocking force on the Khan Yunis-Gaza road, commanded by Danny Matt, had ambushed a four-truck convoy of Egyptian reinforcements, killing twenty-two soldiers and wounding thirteen, before withdrawing back to Israel. One paratrooper was lightly wounded.[11]

Sharett was appalled: 'This number [of Egyptian dead] changes not only the dimensions of the incident but also its essence. It turns the incident into an event that could result in grave complications and dangers . . . political and military,' he wrote, knowing that the raid would be seen abroad as signalling the end of his policy of restraint.[12]

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[10] Sharon, *Warrior*, 108.

[11] S. Gafni (ed.), '"Hetz Shahor" el `Aza', *Ma`arachot*, 254, (1977), 41-8; 'Report to the Security Council by the Chief of Staff of the TSO [i.e. UNTSO] Concerning the Incident of 28 Feb. 1955 near Gaza', 17 Mar. 1955, in PRO FO 371-115855 VR1073/130. See also M. Gur (who had participated in the raid), 'HaPeshita Le'Aza', *Ma`arachot* 173 (1966), 3-6, and Sharon, *Warrior*, 102-9. Sharon (p. 102) mistakenly writes that the murderous Fedayeen attack at Moshav Patish (see below) preceded the raid on Gaza and was one of its causes. The Patish attack took place on 25 Mar. 1955, and was probably an Egyptian response to the raid. About the Gaza Raid, Heikal was later misleadingly to write (*Cutting the Lion's Tail*, 66) that 'many of the [Egyptian] dead were bayoneted while they slept'.

[12] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 804, 854-5, entries for 1 and 22 Mar. 1955. The Activists, on the other hand, were not particularly troubled by the raid's possible political fall-out. As Givli told the British air attaché in Tel Aviv, relations with the Western powers were already so bad that they could not really deteriorate further. The 'worst' that the United States could do would be to suspend the foreign-aid payments ('grant-in-aid') and perhaps hold up

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The IDF, meanwhile, on instructions from Ben-Gurion, issued a spurious explanation: an Egyptian unit had ambushed an IDF patrol inside Israeli territory; the Israeli unit, reinforced, had chased the Egyptians across the border, reached the Gaza camp, and attacked it. The Israeli troops were briefed to lie to UN observers, if questioned. Israel's spokesmen stuck to this 'hot-pursuit' story in the following months. 'Who will believe that we are telling the truth?', Sharett asked in his diary.[13]

Sharett reflected that perhaps the raid on Gaza had been his 'greatest failure' and wondered about its 'political and military repercussions'.[14] He was sure that it would render 'the possibility of peace' with Egypt 'more remote' and harm prospects of receiving American arms and security guarantees.[15]

Repercussions

The raid's short-term repercussions were clear. It apparently boosted Israeli morale,[16] 'giving the army and the country a feeling of self-confidence', as Ben-Gurion told the Cabinet.[17] And, for a fortnight, the Gaza border was free of serious incidents.

But the morning after the raid there were riots in the Gaza refugee camps against both the Egyptian authorities and the local offices of UNRWA and UNTSO. Egyptian troops shot dead four Palestinian demonstrators after the Strip's civil governor, `Abdullah Rifat, was hit by

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American Jewish contributions to Israel. But the 'vast majority' of Israelis, he argued, would be willing to tighten their belts and absorb this if it enhanced the country's security and sovereignty (British Embassy, Tel Aviv, to Levant Dept., FO, 22 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115837 VR1072/25).

[13] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 804, entry for 1 Mar. 1955; Lt.-Col. Shalev, IDF General Staff officer for MACs, to DMI, 3 Mar. 1955, 2438/7; memo. by A. Nutting, 2 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115897 VR1092/49. Britain's air attaché in Tel Aviv, Wing Commander H. B. Martin, dismissed the Israeli explanation as 'nonsense' (Martin to ACAS(I), Air Ministry (London), 8 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115899). Israel's spokesmen implicitly contradicted the official explanation of the Gaza Raid, when they also explained the raid as a response to the previous six months of Egyptian border attacks. The spokesmen said that during the period 1 July 1954-31 Jan. 1955, Israel had suffered seven dead and twenty-four wounded along the Israeli-Egyptian border, and, during the period 1 Mar. 1954-1 Mar. 1955, there had been 1,836 cases of infiltration from Egyptian territory into Israel ('Arab Aggression and Israel Counteraction', Y. Tekoah, undated (but with covering note from 29 Aug. 1956), ISA FM 2949/4). Sharett (*Yoman Ishi*, iii. 806) described a conversation on 1 Mar. with Yael Dayan, Moshe Dayan's 16-year-old daughter. 'Why were 37 [Egyptians] killed? . . . It is unnecessary, completely unnecessary!' she had said. Sharett had wanted to respond: 'Ask your father!' but had desisted. 'A brilliant and independent girl,' he had jotted down.

[14] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 806-7, entry for 1 Mar. 1955.

[15] Ibid. iii. 816, entry for 6 Mar. 1955.

[16] See, e.g., Daniel Sirkis to Ben-Gurion, 3 Mar. 1955, BGA.

[17] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 816, entry for 6 Mar. 1955.

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a stone. Two UN vehicles were torched and other UN property was destroyed. In Deir al Balah, demonstrators stoned the police station and several Egyptian soldiers 'were beaten in the street'.[18]

IDF Intelligence Branch believed that the rioting was in large measure due to 'the bitterness that has long accumulated against the Egyptian authorities and the UN agencies, because of the difficult economic conditions . . .'.[19] The Egyptians rounded up some sixty-five or seventy 'trouble-makers', among them Munir a Reis (soon named mayor of Gaza) and Muhammad Yusuf al Najjar (later one of the heads of the PLO).[20]

Egypt immediately reinforced its Sinai and Gaza Strip forces (including with 250 National Guardsmen) to deter further IDF raiding (and to show the Strip's population that this was Cairo's intention), to discourage further rioting, and to stop infiltration into Israel.[21]

But the raid's long-term effects were far more important. The available evidence overwhelmingly suggests that Nasser and the RCC were genuinely shaken by the raid, and that the regime radically changed course in its wake. Some foreign observers immediately sensed this: Anthony Nutting, a senior Foreign Office official, told Elath that Israel 'surely must realise the extreme danger of an organised attack upon the Egyptian Army. Surely they realised the sort of feeling which this would arouse in a country with a military dictatorship.'[22]

The raid apparently had an immediate and profound effect upon Nasser, prompting 'his first visit to the Strip since the Revolution'.[23] He was to talk about Gaza for years, and probably not only for purposes of propaganda or self-justification (though the raid clearly suited these purposes as well). During the following months, Nasser never tired of telling foreign visitors of the raid's 'great shock' and how it had 'drastically altered' his views on the possibility of coexistence with Israel.[24] He no

[18] Ya`ari, *Mitzrayim*, 18; chief of staff, UNTSO (Jerusalem), to A. Cordier, executive assistant to UN secretary-general (New York), 12 Mar. 1955, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-28; EIMAC chairman (Gaza) to chief of staff, UNTSO (Jerusalem), UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-95.

[19] 'Special Report: The Gaza Incident', ISA FM 2454/5.

[20] Ya`ari, *Mitzrayim*, 18.

[21] 'Special Report: The Gaza Incident', ISA FM 2454/5.

[22] Untitled memo. by Nutting, 2 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115897 VR1092/49.

[23] J. Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence: Border Warfare from 1953 to 1970*, (Ithaca, NY, 1988), 82.

[24] See reports on Nasser-Burns meeting in Cairo, 1 June 1955 (Burns to secretary-general, 2 June 1955, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-96, EIMAC, Egypt-Israel Talks, June 1955; 'Notes for Use in Interview with Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Reporting my Interview with Egyptian Prime Minister, 1 June 1955', Burns, 2 June 1955, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-96, EIMAC, Egypt-Israel Talks, June 1955; Sir R. Stevenson to FO, 1 June 1955, PRO FO 371-115842). In his memoirs (*Arab and Israeli*, 18), Burns recalled the conversation and added:

> It is difficult to determine exactly what weight to give to Nasser's words. He speaks with an air of sincerity and simplicity; there is no bluster, no menace, instead an appearance of reasonableness. Nevertheless, one remembers that he is a politician who has reached power by way of conspiracy and revolution.

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longer believed in Israel's professions of peacefulness[25] and said that he felt 'personally responsible' for the Egyptian casualties.[26] The raid had obviously hurt the regime's prestige; a military junta clearly could not countenance such loss of face.[27] Egypt, Nasser said, could not 'afford to sustain another [such] defeat' without retaliating.[28] Immediately after the raid, Nasser issued an 'order of the day', promising, in future, 'an eye for an eye'.[29]

Sharett apart, the Israeli leadership completely failed to understand the raid's impact on Egypt and Nasser. IDF intelligence failed to predict that Egyptian foreign and defence policy would henceforth focus on Israel and the need to confront (and perhaps destroy) the Jewish state; and that Nasser would (*a*) organize and, eventually, launch Fedayeen campaigns, and (*b*) negotiate and conclude a major arms deal with the Soviet Union (the Czech deal), to offset Israel's military preponderance.[30]

Sharett's predictions about the raid's possible effect on Israel's relations with the United States and Britain were quickly borne out. Both countries condemned the raid. Nicholls gave Sharett, 'at dictation speed, a serious warning of the consequences [of further raids] to Israel-United Kingdom relations and [to] Israel's future'.[31] Britain's Middle East Office in Cairo regarded the raid as signalling a return to 'the Old Testament methods' and a defeat for Sharett.[32]

Britain (temporarily) halted the supply of a scheduled shipment of Centurion tanks to Israel,[33] and the United States put off 'by at least two months' a 'study' of Israel's security needs, meaning a consideration of Israeli arms requests and a possible US security guarantee. The United

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Glubb, always the soldier, phrased this more bluntly: 'Colonel Nasser is personally charming. He is delightfully frank and sincere in appearance, but is nearly always telling lies' (*Soldier*, 377).

[25] 'Record of Meeting Between Mr. Eytan and General Burns on 3 June 1955', FM memo. ISA FM 2436/8; Sharett statement at meeting of Mapai's Political Committee, 19 Oct. 1955, LPA 26/55.

[26] Burns to secretary-general, 2 June 1955, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-96, EIMAC, Egypt-Israel talks, June 1955; Stevenson to FO, 5 June 1955, PRO FO 371-115842 VR1072/14.

[27] 'BMEO Weekly Political Summary No. 14 for Week Ending Apr. 6, 1955', sent 7 Apr. 1955, PRO FO 371-115462 V1013/17.

[28] 'BMEO Weekly Political Summary No. 15 for Week Ending Apr. 14, 1955', PRO FO 371-115462 V1013/18.

[29] Heikal, *Cutting the Lion's Tail*, 67.

[30] 'Special Report: The Gaza Incident', ISA FM 2454/5. In assessing the Great Powers' reactions to the raid, Intelligence Branch spoke of the United States, Britain, France, and Turkey—but said *not a word* about the Soviet Union. On 6 Mar. 1955 Givli reportedly suggested that, in retaliation for Gaza, Nasser, as 'a face saving gesture . . . would probably mount one or two spectacular reprisal attacks using troops from the Egyptian Commando Battalion' (Martin to ACAS (I), Air Ministry (London), 8 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115899).

[31] Nicholls to FO, 9 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115897.

[32] 'BMEO Weekly Political Summary No. 10 for Week Ending Mar. 9 1955', sent 10 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115461 V1013/13.

[33] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 840, entry for 13 Mar. 1955.

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States, Dulles wrote to Sharett, would have to 'reorientate' this study to take account of the raid, which has 'reinflamed [regional] hatreds'.[34]

In the wake of the raid, Nasser ruled out further clandestine contacts with Israel.[35] But, unknown to the Israelis, the main 'peace' victim of the raid, and of the subsequent deterioration along the Israeli-Egyptian border, was not direct Israeli-Egyptian contacts but 'Project Alpha', the secret Anglo-American initiative for a comprehensive peace. The raid certainly delayed the launching of the initiative.[36] The US ambassador in Cairo, Byroade, reflecting Egyptian thinking, immediately (and sourly) noted the potential link between the raid and the peace initiative: 'all this bodes ill for . . . ALPHA . . . . [It will be] some time before they forget their dead and be willing to cooperate with us in finding overall solution.'[37] As if echoing the message from Cairo, the US Embassy in Tel Aviv reported that the raid signalled the end of Sharett's 'moderate' policy and the resumed ascendancy of the 'activist trends'.[38]

Egypt formally complained to the UN Security Council about the raid. Israel lodged a counter-complaint. Egypt wanted a clear censure of Israel, otherwise, it threatened, it might have to take matters into its own hands.[39] Burns privately proposed that the United States, Britain, and France suspend arms shipments to Israel for three months.[40] France, adopting Israel's line, objected that the Powers could not 'ignore the [Egyptian] provocation[s]'.[41] But, on 29 March 1955, the Council 'severely censured' Israel, without citing the provocations. It was the first time the United States and the Soviet Union had voted together in the Council on Israel.[42]

Eban, who had had to defend the raid at the United Nations, basically sympathized with the resolution and (privately) condemned the raid. His

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[34] 'Memorandum of Conversation' (Eban, Shimoni, Allen, Hart, Bergus), 14 Mar. 1955, NA RG 59, 684a.86/3-1455, Box 2691; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 832, entry for 11 Mar. 1955; FO to Tel Aviv (containing Dulles to Sharett), 15 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115898.

[35] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 837-8, entry for 12 Mar. 1955.

[36] The joint Anglo-American view was that 'Gaza has of course, greatly increased difficulties of launching ALPHA', necessitating a two-three month delay (F. Russell (London) to SecState, 9 Mar. 1955, NA RG 59,684a.86/3-955, Box 2691). Nasser apparently left Eden, who visited Cairo in the third week of March, with the same impression (British Cabinet meeting minute of 27 Mar. 1955, PRO CAB 128-8). As Shimon Shamir argues ('The Collapse of Project Alpha' in Louis and Owen (eds.), *Suez, 1956*), it is probably true that Alpha was a non-starter in so far as nothing but the most brutal American pressure could have induced Israel to give up all or parts of the Negev in exchange for an agreement with Egypt, and such pressure was never on the cards. At the same time, there can be no doubt that Gaza at the very least put a spoke in the wheels of Alpha—and may have decisively put an end to any real interest by Nasser in the initiative.

[37] H. Byroade to SecState, 4 Mar. 1955, NA RG 59 684a.*86*/3-455, Box 2691.

[38] E. B. Lawson (Tel Aviv) to SecState, 4 Mar. 1955, NA RG 59,684a.86/3-455, Box 2691.

[39] Minute by J. F. Brewis, 3 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115829 VR1071/15.

[40] Sir P. Dixon (New York) to FO, 24 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115830 VR1071/43.

[41] Dixon to FO, 14 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115829 VR1071/22.

[42] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 878, entry for 30 Mar. 1955.

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cable to Sharett sent Ben-Gurion into a rage. But Sharett agreed with Eban, that 'retaliatory strikes do not achieve their declared purpose', and harm Israel's international relations.[43]

Ben-Gurion's reply to the UN condemnation was the publication, on 4 April, of a three-page letter he had sent to the chief of general staff commending the paratroops' heroism at Gaza.[44]

While it was clear to Western observers that the Egyptians would not retaliate with main force against Israel ('the Egyptian Army is a threat to no one' and 'no match for the Israeli Army'),[45] within three weeks the Egyptians began to take a 'low-profile' revenge along the Gaza border, sniping across the line, mining IDF patrol roads, and sending raiders to strike inside Israel. (At the same time, routine, economic infiltration decreased markedly, due to the increased Egyptian patrolling.)[46] Israeli officials felt that, cumulatively, the incidents were a 'real threat to the development of the Negev and intended as such by Egypt'.[47] Sharett understood that the Egyptian harassment, which amounted to a systematic campaign, was a 'direct result' of the Gaza Raid, and proved the 'inefficacy' of the retaliatory policy.[48]

The Egyptian attacks culminated in two major incidents—at Patish and, a week later, near Kibbutz Nahal-Oz. On the night of 24-5 March, a two-man squad from Gaza threw two grenades and fired automatic weapons at a Jewish wedding celebration at Moshav Patish, seventeen kilometres east of the Strip. One woman, Varda Friedman, was killed and twenty-two

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[43] Ibid. iii. 894, entry for 3 Apr. 1955.

[44] Text of letter in BGA, Correspondence; Nicholls to Eden, 4 Apr. 1955, PRO FO 371-115831 VR1071/71. The publication of Ben-Gurion's letter 'aroused grave Arab misgivings' (memo. by Nutting, 15 Apr. 1955, PRO FO 371-115899 VR1092/118).

[45] H. W. Glidden, NEB, to G. V. Allen, 24 Mar. 1955, NA RG 59, FW 684a.86/3-2455 CS/G, Box 2691.

[46] 'Report by the Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organization to the Secretary-General on the Incidents between Egypt and Israel, since the Gaza Incident of 28 Feb. 1955', 1 Apr. 1955, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-49, Israeli Complaint to the Security Council, General; F. X. Giacomaggi to Burns, 19 Sept. 1955, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-96, EIMAC Egypt-Israel Talks June 1955; 'The Efficacy of Retaliatory Actions on the Borders', P. Eliav, FM, 5 June 1955, ISA FM 2448/15; 'Meeting Bums-Dayan—16.45 hrs., 11 Apr. 1955', Lt.-Col. Shalev, ISA FM 2438/8. According to Dayan, after Gaza there were 2-3 minings on Israeli patrol roads each week.

In public, Israel disputed the existence of a causal link between the Gaza Raid and the wave of attacks along the Gaza border. Admission of the link would have meant admission that the IDF raid had 'provoked' the Egyptians attacks, thus, in a sense, justifying them. So Eytan wrote to Burns that 'the . . . attacks on Israel patrols by Egyptian outposts . . . can hardly be considered as having arisen only after 28 Feb.' (Eytan to Bums, 17 June 1955, ISA FM 2439/3).

[47] British Embassy (Tel Aviv) to FO, 29 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115838 VR1072/31.

[48] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 923, entry for 11 Apr. 1955, and 854-5, entry for 22 Mar. 1955; Bums, *Arab and Israeli*, 75-6.

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persons were wounded. The EIMAC subsequently condemned Egypt for the raid.[49] The attack sent shock waves through Israel.[50]

Ben-Gurion proposed that the IDF conquer the Gaza Strip.[51] Sharett was opposed; Golda Meir and Levi Eshkol supported Ben-Gurion. The full Cabinet discussed the proposal on 27 March, but deferred decision until the following week.[52] Two days later, Sharett spelled out the possible 'ramifications' of Israeli conquest of the Strip: activation of the 1950 Tripartite Declaration, perhaps including an attack on Israel; a Western arms embargo; and the torpedoing of an American security guarantee. 'What we succeeded in doing in the fateful year 1948 [i.e. expanding Israel's borders] cannot be repeated at will . . . . At this time we are obliged to accept our present borders and to strive . . . for peace.' Ben-Gurion responded that, unchecked, Egypt's 'influence' would spread throughout Africa; the United States would not retaliate effectively and Britain would not invade the Negev; and, should Britain invade, its troops would be 'ignominiously driven out' and the Palestinian refugees in the Strip would be 'driven out to Jordan'; and, even if the refugees stayed put, 'we would manage'.[53] The Cabinet voted on 3 April. Four ministers voted with Ben-Gurion, nine against, and two abstained. 'So we were saved from a catastrophe whose outcome no one could know,' Sharett noted in his diary.[54] Ben-Gurion never forgave Sharett this defeat.

Rumours of the Activists' motion to conquer the Strip quickly filtered

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[49] IDF Operations Branch to minister of defence, 24 Mar. 1955, BGA, Correspondence; T. Wikeley (Jerusalem) to FO, 28 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115854 VR1073/128.

[50] One of those who recorded 'the deep impression' the raid had made on the Israeli public was Eleanor Roosevelt, the widow of Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was in Israel at the time (E. Roosevelt to minister of state at Foreign Office ('Dear Arthur'), 26 Mar. 1955 (attached to minute by E. M. Rose, 14 Apr. 1955), PRO FO 371-115899).

[51] Dayan, *Avnei*, 143.

[52] Ben-Gurion diary, entry for 25-8 Mar. 1955, BGA; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 864-5, entry for 27 Mar. 1955. Typically, Sharett was plagued by second thoughts. 'Perhaps I am lacking in vision and daring and I should not interfere [with Ben-Gurion's plans]', he told his wife Zipora. She responded, tactfully: 'Certainly he is superior to you in imagination, but that is your advantage [over Ben-Gurion], your feet are solidly planted on the ground of realism while he floats about in the clouds.'

[53] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 867, 872-5, entries for 28 and 29 Mar. 1955.

[54] Ibid. iii. 894. Ben-Gurion was later to complain that 'we could have expelled the Egyptians from the Gaza Strip in one night' without suffering penalties in the international arena (Ben-Gurion to the Mapai Cabinet ministers, 28 June 1956, BGA). For months Ben-Gurion was to toy with the idea of conquering the Strip. On 15 June 1955 he told Nahum Goldmann, president of the World Jewish Congress, that, if the border incidents continued, Israel would conquer the Strip. 'And what of world reaction . . . [?]', asked Goldmann. 'We will hold out!' replied Ben-Gurion. And what about economic sanctions? 'No matter, we shall overcome them!' responded Ben-Gurion, adding: 'You live in New York and do not feel [Israel's] security problem . . . . If there is no security, there will be no settlement [activity]. Everything will be destroyed' (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1059-60, entry for 15 June 1955).

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out. In early April, Arab diplomats asked Dulles how the United States would react. Dulles, according to reports reaching Jerusalem, said the United States would 'intervene . . . militarily', in line with the Tripartite Declaration.[55] But, as foreseen by Sharett, the Patish incident won Israel diplomatic points. Britain's UN representative condemned Patish as an 'outrage' and Whitehall made representations to Cairo. The Egyptian foreign minister retorted that one of the Patish terrorists had been pursuing a private 'vendetta. The Israelis had murdered [his] sister . . . and he was taking revenge.'[56]

The second incident, a week after Patish, also resulted in proposals to conquer Egyptian territory. On 3 April Egyptian troops opened fire on an Israeli patrol vehicle near Kibbutz Nahal-Oz. Both sides brought up reinforcements and let loose with mortars, some Egyptian shells falling near the settlement. Two Israeli soldiers were killed, four seriously injured, and eleven lightly injured. Most of the Israeli casualties were sustained on the Egyptian side of the line, indicating, perhaps, that the Israelis had tried to attack the Egyptian position after the initial Egyptian fire.[57] Gideon Rafael, Sharett's aide, proposed that Israel conquer a strip of land between the Gaza Strip and Sinai, a variant of the proposal to conquer Gaza itself. Sharett rejected the idea.[58]

At the Cabinet meeting next day, Ben-Gurion proposed that Israel unilaterally scrap the armistice agreement with Egypt. Sharett countered that Ben-Gurion was, in effect, again proposing conquest of the Strip. The 6-6 Cabinet tie, quashing the proposal, represented a further defeat for Ben-Gurion.

According to IDF intelligence, the Egyptian front-line troops had standing orders to fire on all Israeli patrols approaching the border. Dayan countered with an order allowing IDF artillery to give patrols, if attacked, covering fire.[59] But Egypt's pinprick attacks continued, with incessant mine-laying and sniping. In one incident, on 9 April, two Israeli soldiers

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[55] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 926, entry for 12 Apr. 1955.

[56] Dixon to FO, 30 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115831 VR1071/58; Stevenson to FO, 30 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115838 VR1072/32.

[57] Wikeley to FO, 10 Apr. 1954, PRO FO 371-115855 R1073/139.

[58] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 895-6, entry for 3 Apr. 1955. After Patish and Nahal-Oz, US officials feared that Israel would 'annex the whole or part of the Gaza Strip'. But British officials, always more concerned about Jordan, felt that Israel's main objective in a war would be not the Strip but an 'Eastern frontier on the river Jordan', that is, conquest of the West Bank. According to this scenario, incidents along the Gaza border, 'exacerbated' by Israel, would trigger Jordanian intervention, which would serve as a pretext to conquer the West Bank. The British Joint Planning Staff proposed that, in such an event, the RAF would bomb Israeli airfields and secure the Jordan River crossings ('Military Action in the Event of Israeli Aggression', 22 Apr. 1955, Joint Planning Staff (approved by Chiefs of Staff Committee, PRO FO 371 115840)).

[59] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 897-900, entry for 4 Apr. 1955.

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were killed and two wounded when a command car was destroyed by a mine.[60]

Far from curbing infiltrator attacks, the Gaza Raid proved a great catalyst of Israeli-Egyptian violence. Before 28 February 1955, attacks across the Gaza frontier into Israel had been local and sporadic, not state policy; thereafter, they were promoted and directed by Cairo. Before 28 February, Cairo generally had pursued a 'policy of restraint'; attacks and sorties had invariably, or almost invariably, been on local initiative or aimed at intelligence-gathering.[61] After Gaza, everything changed. A comparison between 1954 and 1955 illustrates the point. Seven Israelis were killed and forty-three wounded along the Gaza border in 1954. The following year, forty-eight were killed and 144 wounded. In 1954 there were nine mining attacks against Israel along the Gaza border; in 1955, forty-nine.[62]

The Gaza Raid proved to be a turning-point in Israeli-Egyptian relations and in the history of the Middle East. In effect, the two states stopped toying with the possibility of a settlement and plunged headlong down the road to war. In 1956 Sharett, after his ouster from the Cabinet, said that the raid had put an end to the covert Israeli-Egyptian peace contacts. And, unable to pass over the blow in silence, Cairo had embarked on a campaign of border harassment, culminating in the Fedayeen campaign of August 1955.[63]

But Gaza had not only led to Egyptian counter-raiding. It had also set in motion a massive arms race, bound to end in war. And the arms race sucked in the Great Powers, and particularly the Soviet Union, turning what had been a conflict between Third World states into a conflict between Third World states supported and, eventually, encouraged by Great Powers. The Middle East had thus become yet another battleground in the Cold War.

Raiding and Counter-Raiding After Gaza, May-August 1955

The systematic sniping and mine-laying, which some UN officials attributed to increased Egyptian nervousness after the Gaza Raid but which Israeli officials, including Sharett, attributed to a desire to avenge the raid,[64] continued through April and early May. On 17 May an Egyptian

[60] UNTSO report on EIMAC meeting of 17 Apr. 1955, 18 Apr. 1955, PRO FO 371-115856.

[61] Stevenson to FO, 6 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115897 VR1092/55.

[62] S. Tuval to Information and Armistice Commissions Depts., FM, 13 Nov. 1956, ISA FM 2952/2.

[63] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1518, entry for 28 June 1956.

[64] Ibid. iii. 898, entry for 4 Apr. 1955.

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squad crossed the line near Kibbutz Kissufim, laying two mines, one of which killed three Israeli soldiers and wounded three. This particular attack may have been a reaction to a (probably accidental) Israeli border-crossing in Sinai, which ended in a firefight in which one Egyptian soldier was killed and several wounded.[65]

The Mapai ministerial caucus convened and heard Dayan propose to storm and destroy a platoon-sized Egyptian position opposite Kissufim. Sharett expressed reservations, but his heart was not in it. Israel had shown restraint following three previous Arab attacks (Patish, Nahal-Oz, and Zecharya);[66] enough was enough. The well-worn arguments for and against retaliation were rehearsed. But the Mapai ministers agreed that the minings had to be answered, especially in view of the impending, 20 July, general elections in which non-response might be interpreted by the voters as (Mapai) weakness. Ben-Gurion added, his voice raised, that Nasser had to be taught a lesson, or overthrown: 'It is certainly possible to overthrow him and it is a blessed obligation [*mitzvah*] to do so.' Who does this 'Nasser shmasser' think he is?[67] But nothing was decided.

The caucus reconvened the following day. Minister without Portfolio Zalman Aranne argued that the raid would not affect Israeli-US relations: if the United States wanted a defence pact with Israel, it would sign it whether or not Israel struck. Golda Meir suggested retaliating in kind, by mining Gaza patrol roads. Sharett declined to oppose his Mapai colleagues by taking the matter to the full Cabinet and, following this meeting, apparently decided not to try to hold on to the premiership after the elections:[68] 'I will not impose my authority as prime minister in opposition to my party. It is better that I resign than take such a course.'[69]

The IDF raiders went in on the night of 18/19 May, storming the position, putting the Egyptians to flight, and blowing up the bunkers, before withdrawing with captured weaponry and a cheap victory. Neither side apparently suffered any casualties.[70] Foreign observers understood that the raid had been 'a partial defeat for . . . Sharett and the moderates'.[71] Both the United States and Britain protested to Tel Aviv.[72]

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[65] Ibid. iv. 999, 1004, entries for 17 and 18 May 1955.

[66] On the night of 17 Apr., a squad of infiltrators from Jordan blew up a house in Moshav Zecharya, wounding three women and two men (UNTSO report from 21 Apr. 1955 on IJMAC meeting of 21 Apr. PRO FO 371-115856; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 943, entry for 18 Apr. 1955).

[67] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1000-2, entry for 17 May 1955.

[68] As things turned out, Sharett was to be trapped in the lame duck premiership for more than three months, until early Nov., when Ben-Gurion at last managed to put together a new coalition government.

[69] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1003-4, 1006-7, entries for 18 May 1955.

[70] Ibid. iv. 1009, entry for 19 May 1955.

[71] 'BMEO Weekly Political Summary No. 21 for Week Ending May 26, 1955', PRO FO 371-115462 V1013/24.

[72] Nicholls to FO, 23 May 1955, PRO FO 371-115841; Nicholls to Shuckburgh, 27 May 1955, PRO FO 371-115842 VR1072/133.

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The Egyptians had (again) been humiliated—and quickly took revenge. On 30 May they initiated an exchange of fire that escalated into a shelling duel, in which the kibbutzim Nirim, Kissufim, and 'Ein HaShlosha were hit. Two Israelis, one from Nirim, were killed, and eight were injured, four of them civilians. Sharett wrote: 'It is clear to me that [the attack] was a reaction to the conquest of the Egyptian [Kissufim] position . . . . And that conquest was a retaliation for the murderous [Egyptian] mining . . . . So the cycle continues.'[73] Burns criticized 'Israeli persistence in patrolling right up to the demarcation line, combined with occasional use of prohibited armoured half-tracks'.[74] The United States and Britain protested to Cairo over the incident,[75] but also made representations to Tel Aviv over the retaliatory policy and the 'provocative' patrolling.[76]

The 30 May shelling was followed by several weeks of relative quiet, broken only by two sabotage attacks on the water pipeline in the western Negev, several Egyptian intelligence-gathering patrols, and an infiltrator grenade attack on a house in Patish, in which two civilians were badly injured.

Back in November 1954, Burns had proposed a set of tension-relieving measures along the Gaza frontier, including joint patrols, a local commanders' agreement, and barbed wire fences. Intermittent UN-Israeli and UN-Egyptian discussions had got nowhere. On 28 March 1955, a month after the Gaza Raid, Burns's proposals were endorsed by the Security Council. On 28 June direct Israeli-Egyptian talks, under UN auspices, began at Kilometre 95. There was some progress toward an LCA,[77] but the talks dragged on inconclusively, against a backdrop of relative calm along the lines, until a major explosion in late August.

On 22 August an Israeli command car broke down on the patrol road west of Kibbutz Mefalsim and a nearby Egyptian position, on Hill 79, opened up with light weapons fire. An IDF paratroop platoon on half-tracks rushed to the rescue, drove headlong across the border, and, supported by mortars, assaulted the Egyptian position. It is unclear whether the border-crossing operation had been approved in advance by either Ben-Gurion or Dayan. The Egyptian force fled, leaving behind weapons, three or four dead, and several wounded. None of the Israelis was hurt. The Egyptians had again been humiliated.[78]

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[73] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1031, 1033, entries for 30 and 31 May 1955.

[74] Bums to secretary-general, 31 May 1955, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-95.

[75] 'Memorandum of Conversation' (Eban, Shiloah, Allen, Bergus), 8 June 1955, NA RG 59, 684a.86/6-855, Box 2691; Nutting to secretary of state, 3 June 1955, PRO FO 371-115842 VR1072/147.

[76] FO to British Embassy (Tel Aviv), 4 June 1955, PRO FO 371-115842.

[77] Bums, *Arab and Israeli*, 69-84; Lt.-Col. Y. Nursella, Israel delegation to EIMAC, to Tekoah, 8 Aug. 1955, ISA FM 2439/4; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1096-7, entry for 24 July 1955.

[78] Gur, *Peluga Dalet*, 164-5; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1143, entry for 22 Aug. 1955 (written on 9 Oct.); Bums to secretary-general, 1 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-115833. Bar-On (*Etgar*

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Two days later Nasser announced the suspension of the talks on tension-relieving measures.[79] Jerusalem was not surprised. Indeed, Sharett at one point seemed to suggest that Egypt had deliberately manufactured the incident to give it an excuse to call off the talks.[80]

But the Egyptian response was to be far more substantial. Nasser had promised after the Gaza Raid that Egypt would respond to the next IDF assault. During March-May 1955 the tool for such a response, the Fedayeen battalion, was being fashioned. With Mefalsim, it was activated.

The Emergence of the Fedayeen

The Fedayeen phenomenon was rooted both in the Palestinian infiltrator raids into Israel in the early 1950s and in the organized Egyptian guerrilla and terrorist harassment of the British in the Suez Canal Zone after the Free Officer's revolution of July 1952.

From the first, British intelligence believed that the campaign was run by Egyptian military intelligence. A first wave of attacks on the British, mostly thefts of munitions and arms, took place in October-December 1952. The British took note of 'German instructors' training Egyptian troops and 'liberation squads' ('Fedayeen'), belonging to the newly formed Egyptian National Guard, in sabotage and mine-laying.[81] By spring 1953 there were some fourteen Fedayeen camps in Egypt, some of them in the Kantara and Port Said areas.

Egyptian attacks on British Canal Zone personnel and installations were renewed, with intensity, in April-May 1953. British intelligence believed that the attacks were organized by the Egyptian Army Headquarters in

(Footnote continued from previous page)

VeTigra, 25) speaks of five Egyptians killed. The official Israeli version of the incident asserted that the soldiers who had come under fire spontaneously assaulted the offending Egyptian position ('Press Release No. 1', Israel Government Press Office, 25 Aug. 1955, PRO FO 371-115847). Drori ('Mediniyut HaGmul', 78) implicitly upholds this version of the incident. Drori cites this incident—which provoked the first wave of 'official' Egyptian Fedayeen attacks—as an example of how low-ranking officers, through local initiatives, managed significantly to escalate the Israeli-Arab conflict.

[79] H. Trevelyan (Cairo) to FO, 24 Aug. 1955, PRO FO 371-115845 VR1072/243; 'Press Release No. 1', Israel Government Press Office, 25 Aug. 1955, PRO FO 371-115847.

[80] 'Gaza', R. M. Hadow, 30 Aug. 1955, PRO FO 371-115847 VR1072/268.

[81] Gen. Robertson, British Commander-in-Chief, Middle East Land Forces, to Lt.-Gen. H. Redman, vice-chief, Imperial General Staff (London) 28 Mar. 1953, and enclosed memo. 'Maintenance of our Position in Egypt', PRO WO 216/849. The army proposed expelling Egyptians from sensitive sites in the zone—including 'the inhabitants of certain villages [Abu Gamus Mefisha, Fayid, and Fanara] which are the known haunts of thieves and undesirables or are situated on our main road communications'. See also 'Note Prepared Jointly by GS(I) GHQ, MELF, GS(I) HQ BTE, and SIME', undated but with covering note,? to A. A. D. Montague Browne, 20 Apr. 1953, PRO PREM 11/392. The report was sent by minister of defence to prime minister. See also Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 25.

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Ismailia, under 'direct control from Cairo', with Zakarriya Muhyi-ul-Din, the Egyptian minister of interior and deputy prime minister, in charge of intelligence activities, pulling the strings.[82]

The campaign against the British during 1952-4 along the Canal was to serve as a type of model and inspiration for the subsequent Fedayeen campaigns against Israel. Tactics used along the Canal were to be used by Egyptian military intelligence and the Fedayeen on the Gaza border and some of the experienced Canal-side guerrillas were to be used both to train the Gaza Fedayeen Battalion and to bolster its ranks.

As we have seen, officially organized Egyptian murder and sabotage raiding against Israel had already begun in April 1954. The objective of the raids of spring and summer 1954, in which Israeli civilian and military vehicles and buildings were attacked, was revenge and intelligence-gathering. The raiders, directed by the Egyptian army intelligence office in Gaza, were mostly locally recruited Palestinians, reinforced by a handful of NCOs of the regular Egyptian army. But the raids were sporadic and amateur, and most were probably planned and directed locally.

Systematic murder and sabotage raids, organized from Cairo by the Egyptian army, began only ten months later, in the wake of the Gaza Raid. Initially, during March-April 1955, the Egyptians used front-line Egyptian and Palestinian troops, bolstered by National Guardsmen brought in from Egypt proper. But, at the same time, Cairo began organizing proper Fedayeen units, solely for cross-border guerrilla and terrorist operations. Acting on two fronts, Egyptian military intelligence began (*a*) recruiting and organizing raiders from Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, and (*b*) organizing a Fedayeen 'battalion' in the Gaza Strip.

Egyptian Recruitment and Organization of Raiders from Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, March-December 1955

Within days of the Gaza Raid, Egypt began to recruit and organize Fedayeen in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. The aim was threefold: to avenge Israeli raids against Egypt, to undermine morale along the Israeli border, and, in the case of Jordan, to embroil the Hashemites in a 'plague-on-both-your-houses' conflict with Israel. As seen from Cairo, the advantage of such 'third-country raiding' was that Israel would encounter difficulties tracing the raids to Egypt and would, perforce, hold responsible, and perhaps punish, the countries from which the raids originated.

During March-April 1955 'parties of Egyptian officers' visited Damascus

[82] Stevenson to FO, 9 May 1953, PRO PREM 11/392; 'Egypt: Incidents in the Canal Zone, Note by the Minister of State', 6 May 1953, PRO PREM 11/392; Stevenson to FO, 23 Jan. 1954, PRO FO 371-108447 E1193/16.

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three times in an effort to recruit Palestinians for operations against Israel. They tried to co-ordinate this activity with Syrian intelligence. The aim was to send squads into Israel through Jordan rather than directly across the Syrian-Israeli border (which Damascus had traditionally kept quiet and infiltration-free). The Egyptians promised 'to pay well'.[83]

Some months later, in an apparent reference to these visits, Syria's military attaché in Cairo, Colonel Badir Bashour, told the Jordanian military attaché, Radi `Abdallah, that 'Egypt and Syria had agreed some time ago on the principle of organizing the gangs [i.e. Fedayeen] and that Syria had instructed Almaghawir School which is attached to the Syrian Army [to prepare] a number of Syrian Commandos to operate inside Palestine when necessity arises'. `Abdallah reported that two Syrian companies had already completed such training, but Syria had not activated them because of objections by Lebanon, which feared Israeli retaliation against Lebanese border villages, from which the commandos were apparently supposed to operate.[84]

At the same time, and with financial support from the Saudis, Egypt initiated a recruitment drive in Jordan. On 25 March, Kemal Afifi, an Egyptian intelligence officer, met an Arab Legionnaire, 'Sergeant A', in Amman. Afifi apparently spoke of infiltration raids and of obtaining intelligence about Eilat and British troops in 'Aqaba. At the same time, another Egyptian officer, Hassan Beq Tuhami—later to be a key official in Anwar Sadat's regime—smuggled some time bombs from Egypt to the Egyptian Embassy in Amman 'for terrorists who volunteer to infiltrate into Israel'.[85]

In June, Glubb warned his subordinates of the Egyptian recruitment effort. One of these, `Abd al Latif al Saman, the Arab Legion commander in the Nablus District, on 12 June informed his units:

> We have learned . . . the Egyptian authorities are trying to set up gangs in Syria and Jordan to infiltrate into Israeli territory and carry out acts of sabotage and terrorism . . . in order to create confusion and trigger clashes between the Arab states [meaning Jordan] and Israel, with the aim of reducing the pressure on the Gaza Strip.[86]

When the British quietly protested to Cairo, the deputy head of Egyptian military intelligence 'professed to be sceptical and even a little indignant'.[87]

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[83] Duke to FO, 19 Apr. 1955, PRO FO 371-115899; 'Note on Infiltration from Jordan into Israel', Arab Legion HQ, 27 Apr. 1955, PRO FO 371-115899. The British did not believe that the 'Syrians . . . [were] actively involved' in this recruitment effort (minute by P. H. Laurence, 26 July 1955, to preceding 'Note').

[84] Radi `Abdallah (Cairo) to Glubb (Amman), 5 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-115905.

[85] 'The Case of Sergeant A of the Arab Legion', Arab Legion Intelligence, 16 July 1955, PRO FO 371-115902.

[86] Ya`ari, *Mitzrayim*, 21.

[87] Stevenson to FO, 3 May 1955, PRO FO 371-115899 R1092/130

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The Egyptians stepped up their efforts in Jordan and Syria during the summer. In mid-May they appointed a military attaché to their Amman Embassy, apparently to promote Fedayeen activity as well as general anti-Hashemite subversion. 'Sergeant A' specifically implicated the attaché, Lieutenant-Colonel Mahmud Salah ad Din Mustafa, in the organization of infiltration. Mustafa reportedly spent ten days that summer on the Jordanian-Israeli frontier, scouting out the land.[88]

The spies in Amman that summer were probably falling over each other keeping watch on Mustafa. Israeli intelligence seems to have kept close tabs on him from the moment of his arrival, and in early August learnt that two raids from Jordan were planned against Israeli settlements.[89]

Following the August 1955 Fedayeen raids from the Gaza Strip and the Israeli response at Khan Yunis (see below), the Egyptians redoubled recruitment efforts in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, where Legion agents discovered recruiting circulars in the refugee camps of `Aqabat Jabr and Jabal Hussein.[90]

Fedayeen operations in Syria and Lebanon were organized by the Egyptian military attaché to Damascus, Major Jamal Hamad. In Jordan, Colonel Mustafa seems to have been assisted in this task by the Egyptian minister, Brigadier Muhammad Ibrahim Seif ad Din. A newly appointed Egyptian consul-general in Jerusalem also, apparently, gave a hand. Members of the Egyptian delegation to a conference of Arab university graduates in Jerusalem in September, apparently intelligence officers, reportedly had contacted Husayni supporters, including the ex-Mufti's relative, Daoud Husayni, 'to revive the Mufti's former terrorist organisations with a view to raiding Israel', wrote Glubb. The Egyptian agents in Jordan apparently made use or tried to make use in the recruitment drive of ex-Mufti supporters who headed the 'Refugee Offices' in Nablus and Amman, `Aziz al Daoudi, Mustafa at Tahar, `Abd al Rahman as Sakhsakh, and Ahmad al Halil. Israeli intelligence had reports of Egyptian recruiting efforts in the Hebron Hills and of the existence of a Fedayeen group—originally set up by Syrians—in Irbid in northern Jordan. In Lebanon, the clandestine recruitment centres were Bint Jbail and Maroun ar Ras. An American report—based on a talk with Harkabi in early

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[88] British Embassy, Amman, to British Embassy, Cairo, 14 June 1955, PRO FO 371-115713; 'The Case of Sergeant A of the Arab Legion', PRO FO 371-115902; FO minute, 25 June 1955, PRO FO 371-115713 VJ1911/1. According to British Embassy in Cairo, Mustafa was a former artillery officer who had joined the National Guard HQ in 1954. Mustafa was 'not popular among fellow officers of the Egyptian Army', spoke good English and was 'politically minded'. He was believed to have been personally selected as military attaché in Amman by Nasser (Cairo to British Embassy, Amman, 12 July 1955, PRO FO 371-115713).

[89] Nicholls to FO, 8 Aug. 1955, PRO FO 371-115902 VR1092/200; Ya'ari, *Mitzrayim*, 21; Duke to FO, 30 Aug. 1955, PRO FO 371-115903 VR1092/228.

[90] Ya`ari, *Mitzrayim*, 21.

August 1956—names the Egyptian assistant military attaché in Beirut, Captain Hassan `Ali Khail, an intelligence man, as active in this sphere, 'with the full knowledge and consent of the Lebanese authorities'.[91]

The increasingly shrill reports of Egyptian Fedayeen recruitment in Jordan and Lebanon prompted Burns to call for Western 'representations' in Cairo. Burns also criticized official Egyptian glorification of Fedayeen attacks,[92] and Hammarskjold complained to Cairo a few days later.[93] Amman stepped up its surveillance of Egyptian and ex-Mufti agents active in the kingdom[94] and, in November, complained directly to Nasser about Colonel Mustafa's activities.[95] Britain pressed Amman to restrict the attaché's freedom of action.[96]

Nevertheless, by November Egyptian recruiters were having 'fair success'. Jordanian intelligence attributed the 4 November demolition of a house in Israel, across the line from Qalqilya, to 'terrorists organised by Egyptian Embassy Amman'.[97] Glubb maintained that the Egyptians were sending the Palestinians they recruited in Jordan to Gaza for training. At the end of November, the Jordanians reportedly issued a warrant for the arrest of Walid Salah, a former Jordanian foreign minister suspected of being in Egyptian pay and recruiting Palestinian villagers for raids.[98] Israeli intelligence believed that Jordanian NG units (though not the Arab Legion) were turning a blind eye to Egyptian recruiting efforts in Jenin and Hebron.[99]

Egypt's main propaganda agency, the Voice of the Arabs radio station, broadcast 'openly' on 10 November that terrorists operating from Jordan against Israel were 'organized and trained' by Egypt.[100] But Egypt continued to deny involvement in terrorist infiltration from Jordan—while

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[91] 'The Statement by Colonel Yehoshafat Harkabi, the Director of Military Intelligence, at a Meeting with Journalists', 7 Oct. 1955, ISA FM 2440/7; 'Copy of Message Sent by Glubb Pasha to Staff Liaison Officer, the Arab Legion, London, and GHQ MELF, 8/10/55', PRO FO 371-115905; Col. L. J. Query, US military attaché, Tel Aviv, to ambassador, 9 Aug. 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/8-1556, Box 2695; Ya`ari, *Mitzrayim*, 21-2.

[92] Bums to secretary-general, 10 Oct. 1955, UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.0-2.

[93] Trevelyan to FO, 17 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115848 VR1072/285.

[94] H. A. Dudgeon (Amman) to E. M. Rose, Levant Department, FO, 29 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-115905 VR1092/325; British Embassy (Amman) to British Embassy (Tel Aviv), 26 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115713; Duke to FO, 19 Nov. 1955, PRO FO 371-115909.

[95] British Embassy (Cairo) to British Embassy (Amman), 16 Nov. 1955, PRO FO 371-115713.

[96] FO to British Embassy (Amman), 16 Nov. 1955, PRO FO 371-115909; Duke to FO, 19 Nov. 1955, PRO FO 371-115909.

[97] QIADA to TJL (Jordan Embassy, London), 7 Nov. 1955, PRO FO 371-115909.

[98] 'Egyptian Complicity in Fida'iyun Activities in Israel, Aug.—Nov. 1955', E. W. Schaefer to W. C. Burdett (Washington), 8 Dec. 1955, NA RG 59, 684a.86/12-855, Box 2693.

[99] Nicholls to FO, 11 Nov. 1955, PRO FO 371-115909 VR1092/409; Duke to FO, 21 Nov. 1955, PRO FO 371 115909 R1092/420.

[100] Glubb to Melville (London), 13 Nov. 1955, PRO FO 371-115909 VR1092/409B.

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organizing it.[101] In mid-December the IDF captured two infiltrators *en route* from Gaza to Jordan through Israel. They were carrying 13,000 rounds of 9 mm ammunition—presumably for Egyptian-recruited Fedayeen.[102]

But by and large, Egyptian efforts to launch raids from Jordan met with little success. Jordanian surveillance and intervention took their toll; perhaps Western pressures also dampened Cairo's enthusiasm. However, there were some successes. Israeli and Western officials suspected that a series of raids from Jordan in November, all with a similar *modus operandi*, were Egyptian-organized: on 5 November saboteurs blew up a house in Sdeh Hemed; the following day, a water-pumping station was blown up in `Ein Harod; on 13 November a house was blown up in Rosh Ha`Ayin; and, on the night of 17/18 November, an agricultural machinery shed was blown up in Safiah.[103]

Israel also suspected Syrian 'complicity' in 'Egyptian-controlled' raiding in the north.[104] But the Syrians, whatever their actual links with Egyptian military intelligence, maintained a credible façade of uninvolvement. In early December the Syrian chief of staff, General Shuqeir, informed the US military attaché in Damascus that he had recently been approached by the Egyptians 'with a view to allowing organisation in Syria of "fedayeen"'. He had consulted the Lebanese chief of staff and both had then told the Egyptians that they would not co-operate as the result would be Israeli reprisals against their countries.[105]

In November 1955 three senior Arab Legion officers visited Lebanon for ten days as guests of the Lebanese army. The Lebanese chief of staff inveighed against Egyptian activities in Lebanon, which included the organization, by Egyptian officers 'in plain clothes', of infiltrations into Israel 'and all the [other] tricks from which the Jordanians have themselves been suffering'. The Egyptian officers contacted Palestinian refugees and, according to Glubb, had promised 'gang leaders' £40 per month and 'ordinary gangsters' £20. A number of raids had occurred (probably the September 1955 raids, dealt with below). The Lebanese had then arrested several 'refugee gangsters' and the border had calmed down.[106]

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[101] See, e.g., Trevelyan to FO, 25 Nov. 1955, PRO FO 371-115910 VR1092/432; Bums to secretary-general, 12 Dec. 1955, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-96, EIMAC 1955/1956 SG Proposals.

[102] Nicholls to FO, 19 Dec. 1955, PRO FO 371-115911 VR1092/470; Duke to FO, 20 Dec. 1955, PRO FO 371-115911 VR1092/473.

[103] 'Instructions for Chef de Bataillon Giacomaggi', by E. L. M. Bums, undated (but from second half Nov. 1955), UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-96 EIMAC 1955/1956 SG Proposals.

[104] Dixon to FO, 27 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115835 R1071/154.

[105] 'Egyptian Commando Activities', Hadow, 6 Dec. 1955, PRO FO 371-115916 VR1092/442.

[106] Glubb to Melville, 11 Dec. 1955, PRO FO 371-115916 VR1092/440; Duke to I. D. Scott, CIE, British Embassy, Beirut, 30 Nov. 1955, PRO FO 371-115682. According to Glubb, the Egyptian agents were also busy fomenting rebellion in Beirut in order to instal an 'Egyptian puppet president'. Arms had been smuggled into the country from Syria. Glubb named Lebanese MP Ahmed Asad as the Egyptians' president-designate.

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The Organization of the Gaza Fedayeen, March—August 1955

As we have already noted, immediately after the Gaza Raid Egypt strengthened the existing Palestinian unit in the Strip—the 11th Palestine Border Guards Battalion—and added new units. The reinforcements were largely drawn from the Egyptian National Guard, including its Fedayeen battalion (designated, in some sources, as Battalion 142), which had been used to harass the British along the Suez Canal. According to one source, 280 National Guardsmen were sent to the Strip in the week after the raid, but the bulk appear to have been withdrawn by the end of March, leaving only some eighty.[107]

On 4 April 1955 Dayan told the Cabinet that the advent of the 'murderers' battalion (apparently Battalion 142) 'signalled a clear intention to continue the infiltrations for the purpose of sabotage and murder'.[108] Sharett asked the Americans to try to restrain Nasser and have the battalion withdrawn from the Strip.[109] Dayan believed that the battalion was responsible for the mining along the Gaza border in late March and April, and demanded that Egypt replace the Palestinian line troops with Egyptians.[110]

UNTSO, too, took note of the arrival in the Strip of the National Guardsmen/Fedayeen, with one of its observers reportedly telling the French ambassador in Tel Aviv that he had spoken in the Strip with 'Egyptians who claim to be members of the recently arrived sabotage squads. The Egyptians . . . said quite openly that they had had excellent practice . . . in the Canal Zone and that they would now show Israel what they could do.'[111]

At the same time, Mustafa Hafez, head of Egyptian military intelligence in the Strip, began recruiting dozens of Palestinians, some from Gaza prison cells, to expand his small company of Palestinian scouts into a full-fledged Fedayeen unit. Hafez's unit seems to have liaised with Nasser's office in Cairo through Egyptian intelligence officer Kamal Rifat,[112] though it is unclear whether Nasser directly controlled its operations. Hafez's recruits were trained in the Strip by the National Guardsmen and in NG camps in Egypt. Some of these new Fedayeen joined the Palestinian border guards in mine-laying operations in April 1955.[113]

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[107] 'Egyptian complicity in Fida'iyun Activities in Israel, Aug.—Nov. 1955', Schaefer to Burdett, NA RG 59, 684a.86/12-855, Box 2693.

[108] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 897, entry for 4 Apr. 1955.

[109] Ibid. iii. 899, entry for 4 Apr. 1955.

[110] 'Burns—Dayan Meeting on 11/4/1955', Lt.-Col. Shalev, 11 Apr. 1955, ISA FM 2438/8.

[111] Nicholls to FO, 27 May 1955, PRO FO 115842 VR1072/123.

[112] Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 25.

[113] Aware of Hafez's recruiting, Israel countered with broadcasts designed to dissuade Palestinians from joining the Fedayeen. One broadcast stated:

(Footnote continued on next page)

Hafez's Fedayeen unit was apparently expanded into a formal Egyptian army 'battalion' (*kataeb*) only at the end of 1955 or the beginning of 1956. On 18 December 1955 the Egyptian chief of staff, General `Abd ul Hakim `Amr, ordered the expansion of the 'Palestinian National Guard' in the Gaza Strip with the purpose of

A. Fedayeen operations in enemy territory, including demolition and sabotage, the severing of transport links and causing panic in Israel.

B. Supplying guides to army patrols carrying out penetrations deep in Israeli territory . . .

C. Obtaining intelligence from Israel.

A week after `Amr issued these instructions, senior Egyptian officers, including Hafez, met and decided to increase the Fedayeen's strength by 200, bringing them up to '600'. Two of the battalion's four companies were to operate in and from the northern sector of the Strip, covering the area between Beit Hanun and Tel Aviv; one in the central sector (Beit Hanun—Beersheba); and the fourth in the southern Gaza Strip—Sinai border area. Each soldier was to be paid a monthly wage of E£6, with an additional E£3 promised for each raid into Israel. While the bulk were Palestinian volunteers, all the commissioned and non-commissioned officers, fifty-six in all, were regular Egyptian army personnel. The battalion was apparently at full strength and operational by March 1956. By the start of 1956 the Fedayeen were based in Camps No. 9, 10, and 16, near Gaza, Rafah, and Khan Yunis. The battalion was controlled jointly by the Egyptian army's 'Eastern Command' (responsible for Israel) and Egyptian Military Intelligence, Gaza Strip (that is, Hafez).[114]

Hafez's recruits launched a number of intelligence-gathering missions into Israel (before the first official Fedayeen campaign of August 1955). One of these missions was described by Hussein Abu Hassan Ahmed al Lahawani, a raider captured by an Israeli patrol on 16 July. Al Lahawani, a refugee from Yibna and a resident of the Nuseirat refugee camp, described being guided across the line at Dimra (Erez) by Yusuf al Kathary, formerly of the village of Sumsum, who lived in the Jabaliya refugee camp. He said he had been recruited on 28 June 1955 and sent across by Said al Saga, one of Hafez's assistants. It was Al Lahawani's

(Footnote continued from previous page)

You are imprisoned like a herd of sheep in a narrow pen. Those who claim to be concerned about you and fighting for your sake are the same [ones] who closed the doors of their countries to you. . . . They are prepared to gamble with your blood . . . to the last drop of Palestinian blood. Eliminate from your ranks those who carry out their orders. (BBC monitoring of Israel Radio Arabic broadcast of 2 June 1955, PRO FO 371-115843 VR1072/ 153).

[114] Ya`ari, *Mitzrayim*, 23-4. Dayan (*Diary of the Sinai Campaign*, 5) says that each Feda'i received a wage of E£9 per month, with an additional E£1 or E£2 for each raid. There may have been an additional bonus for killing an Israeli or sabotaging an Israeli target.

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third mission, and his three-man team had been ordered to keep notes on Israeli military traffic near the Bureir (Brur Hayil) junction.[115]

The August 1955 Fedayeen Campaign

After the Gaza Raid Nasser had promised that no more IDF attacks would go unanswered. On 25 August, after months of preparation, Egypt struck, in response to the IDF's raid on 22 August opposite Mefalsim. About a dozen Fedayeen squads, some sixty men in all, were sent across the Gaza border with orders to kill and to sabotage targets. As Nasser was to put it in a talk with Byroade on 27 August, after 22 August 'orders had been sent to frontier forces [to] carry out simultaneous and largescale attacks upon "several" Israeli objectives'. It was the first time that Egypt had simultaneously activated a large number of squads in a strategic response to an Israeli raid.[116]

Four squads crossed the border on the night of 25/6 August: one ambushed an Israeli jeep, killing the *ma"az* of Kibbutz Yad Mordechai, and then planted a string of mines near the Erez crossroads;[117] the others blew up water installations. On the night of 27/8 several squads penetrated deeper into Israel, as far as the Ashkelon area, where they ambushed and killed a soldier and wounded two other persons. On 28 August four Israeli soldiers died and two were wounded when their vehicles hit mines near the Gaza border. On the night of 29/30 August, the climax of the campaign, an Israeli family was attacked near the Qubeiba transit camp, outside Rehovot, forty kilometres north of the Gaza Strip border, and one man was killed and four women and children were wounded. That same night, another squad massacred four farmers near Moshav Beit `Oved; a radio transmitter was blown up near Qubeiba; a military vehicle was ambushed near the Bilu junction, injuring one soldier; Kibbutz Erez was briefly mortared; and an Egyptian fighter aircraft penetrated Israeli airspace north of the Gaza Strip, but was driven off. The following day, another vehicle hit a land mine, and two soldiers were injured. In an ambush near Deir ad Dubban, north of Beit Govrin, a Fedayeen squad killed four civilians in a car. That night, 30/1 August, two Ramie residents were killed when their civilian truck was ambushed near Tall as Sari. The

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[115] Comdt. J. Ringlet (Belgian army) to EIMAC chairman, 22 July 1955, ISA FM 2439/4.

[116] Byroade to Allen, NA RG 59, 684a.86/8-2755, Box 2692; 'Report on the Action of the Office of the Adviser on Middle East Affairs during the Period July—Dec. 1955', unsigned (but by Rafael), undated, ISA FM 2446/1; 'BMEO Weekly Political Summary No. 34 for Week Ending Aug. 30, 1955' (Nicosia), PRO FO 371-115464 V1013/38; `Abdiallah (Cairo) to Glubb, 5 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-115905.

[117] UNTSO report on EIMAC meeting of 19 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-115859.

Fedayeen squad responsible for this then threw hand grenades into a house in Moshav Nahala, wounding a woman. In another ambush, an IDF officer was injured.

> The armistice agreement between Egypt and Israel was thus rendered virtually inoperative. . . . Egypt has embarked on a course designed to destroy security, subject the Israel Defence Army [*sic*] to a constant challenge and drive terror into the hearts of a peaceful, hard-working population over a wide area,

declared the Israeli Foreign Ministry on 1 September. Burns later wrote that he had been 'deeply shocked' by the Fedayeen outrages, which he called 'war crime[s]', and compared them to Nazi acts.[118]

One of the most accomplished of Hafez's Fedayeen was Yunis Mubarak. In the August raids, according to a letter from Hafez found by the IDF in Gaza the following year, Mubarak had 'killed three [Israeli] workers in an orange grove', '[blown] up the main pylon of the "Voice of Israel Overseas" radio station', attacked an Israeli settlement at 'Juala[?]', killing one man and wounding four, and ambushed 'a convoy of vehicles' (all, according to the letter, on 29 August). The following day, according to Hafez, Mubarak had 'killed three people' in an ambush near 'Ajjur, blown up a building in the settlement of 'Sumeil', and ambushed vehicles on the Plugot-Beit Govrin road.[119]

Mubarak's identity had been known to Israeli intelligence since late 1954, when his name repeatedly cropped up in connection with crimes committed in the Negev. He was named as one of two Fedayeen who on 4/5 September murdered an Israeli tractor driver, Arye Nigosh, near Kibbutz Ruhama.[120]

The organization and purposes—apart from revenge—of the Egyptian Fedayeen campaign against Israel in August 1955 are illuminated in a report from 5 September by the Jordanian military attaché in Cairo, Major Radi `Abdallah al Khasuna. The plan, he wrote, had been to send in further Fedayeen after 3 September, but American intercession with

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[118] 'Statement Issued . . . on 1 Sept. by the Foreign Ministry Spokesman', ISA PMO 5433; Bums, *Arab and Israeli*, 88; Dayan, *Avnei*, 150-1; Wallach and Lissak (eds.), *Atlas*, 198. The attacks triggered a widespread demand in Israel for the trial of captured Fedayeen as 'war criminals'. The government rejected the demand, on the grounds that it would not deter and that it might lead to maltreatment of Israelis in Arab hands (Y. Ben-Meir to S. Rosenne, legal adviser at FM, 9 Sept. 1955, ISA FM 2952/2; Rosenne to A. Lourie, 12 Sept. 1955, ISA FM 2440/7).

[119] Dayan, *Diary*, 6-7. The Hafez letter was addressed to the governor of the Gaza Strip and was aimed at interceding on behalf of Mubarak, who was then being tried for the murder of an Arab. It is likely that Hafez deliberately exaggerated Mubarak's 'exploits'.

[120] 'A Murder near Kibbutz Ruhama on 4.9.54', Israel Police Special Branch report, undated, ISA FM 2952/3. The report states: 'SDO says: The murder was committed by Yunis Mubarak who is employed as a scout by the Egyptian intelligence service'. See also Capt. A. Har-Even in the name of DMI to Arye Eilan, FM, 23 Dec. 1954, ISA FM 2436/7 aleph.

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Nasser had halted this. The Fedayeen had received their orders directly from General `Amr, who had been in the Strip—according to `Abdiallah—during 27 August—3 September. The raiders had aimed to demolish Israeli military and economic targets, murder inhabitants, and assassinate 'Ministers, members of Parliament and the leaders of the Zionist Organisation'. According to one Egyptian officer, Nasser had hoped 'to create an intensive atmosphere of fear', leading to 'the shaking of the confidence of the inhabitants in the Israeli Government and army'; 'encourage emigration from Israel and decrease the number of immigrants to Israel'; 'strengthen the morale of the Egyptian Army [and] of the inhabitants of the Gaza area'; and 'strengthen the Revolutionary Government internally'.[121]

Israel's DMI, Harkabi, at the time offered a similar description of Egyptian objectives, but took the analysis a stage further. The Arabs, he said, were still bent on a 'Second Round' that would destroy the Jewish state. In preparation for this, the Egyptians had unleashed a 'guerrilla war' to weaken and destabilize Israel first. Harkabi quoted Colonel Gohar, the head of the Palestine desk at the Egyptian War Ministry, as saying on radio on 31 August that the 'Palestine War had entered a new phase'.[122] Somewhat less objectively, Ben-Gurion a year later defined the Fedayeen as 'gangs of assassins, trained by Egyptian military commanders in the Gaza Strip to kill people on their own land, children going to school, and mothers sleeping in bed'.[123]

The Fedayeen campaign continued until the first days of September 1955, with Israeli patrols managing to kill or capture only a handful of the marauders. Most returned to base after a night or two on Israeli soil. During the week's operations, the Fedayeen killed between twelve and seventeen Israelis and wounded more than a dozen.[124]

One of the Fedayeen who had participated in the ambush near Ashkelon on 27 August was shot by an IDF patrol on his way back to the Strip. The following day UN observers, accompanied by an IDF officer, followed 'tracks of blood' and found a wounded man 'under a bush'. He was Muhammad Hassan Farud, the squad's scout, a resident of Nuseirat refugee camp, formerly a *fellah* from Na`alia, in southern Israel. Questioned by an Arabic-speaking UN observer, he said:

> Three days ago an Egyptian captain came to the [Gaza] prison where I was and asked me to follow him. They gave me military equipment, weapons . . . and told

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[121] `Abdiallah to Glubb, 5 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-115905. Glubb regarded `Abdiallah as reliable (Duke to Shuckburgh, 17 June 1955, PRO FO 371-115902 VR1092/188).

[122] 'Statement by Colonel Yehoshafat Hakabi, DMI, at a Meeting with Journalists', Oct. 1955, ISA FM 2440/7.

[123] Untitled 'Question' and 'Answer' sheet, probably from a journalist's interview with Ben-Gurion, dated 15 Oct. 1956 (possibly should be 15 Nov. 1956), BGA.

[124] Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 25.

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> me to show the way to Na`alia. . . . We left Gaza in the evening of 26 August. . . . We were two groups of four men each. . . . Yesterday evening we went down to the asphalt road [near Ashkelon] and fired at a car; soon afterwards . . . we were fired at. I was wounded, left all my equipment and crawled down here where I have been hiding until now. The other three Egyptians escaped at once.[125]

The Egyptians made no attempt to hide their responsibility for the raids. Indeed, the state-directed Egyptian media extravagantly praised the Fedayeen. An *Al Ahram* article of 10 Septemer 1955, by the paper's military correspondent, Ibrahim Tentawi, was typical. He interviewed a Feda'i who told him:

> We entered Israel nine times, killing 24 Jews, mining all the roads we crossed and reaching the approaches of Tel Aviv. . . [The squad] remained in Israel 15 days without their food supplies running short. . . About the courage of the Jewish soldiers, he told a story how, on coming upon an Israel patrol, the soldiers had pleaded with them in the name of the Prophet Mohammed, to spare them. . . . One of the Jewish soldiers went so far as to grasp my hand and kiss it. I granted their plea . . . and I refrained from killing them myself . . . . But I asked my comrades to do the killing in my place, and they did so forthwith. In one of the settlements . . . we heard the sound of rejoicing and what appeared to be dancing. However, we did not attack, our instructions forbidding us to harm women and civilians.[126]

The Fedayeen campaign was to exert an extravagant pull on the Arab imagination outside Egypt. At last, an Arab state was hitting back at Israel. In Jordan, according to an American assessment from October 1955, the effect of the raids was 'electrifying'. As the US ambassador put it, the previous ten centuries had provided 'little evidence of native courage or valour' among the settled Arabs of the Levant, as was exemplified in 1948. The establishment of a state by a people the Arabs regarded as an 'inferior race' was 'one of the severest moral defeats ever suffered by Islam and the Arabs'—'more galling', even, than the Crusades. Then came the Fedayeen raids of late August 1955. These were seen as a 'prelude to the "second round" . . . [and] as proof of the military capabilities of the Arabs. The calumny that Arabs were militarily incompetent was once and for all disproved . . . . People who should have known better swelled their chests and said it was time to drive the Jews into the sea.'[127]

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[125] UN observers to chairman, EIMAC, 29 Aug. 1955, ISA FM 2952/2; Bums, *Arab and Israeli*, 87.

[126] 'From "Ahram" of 10.9.55', ISA FM 2952/2. See also FM translation of article in *Al Akhbar*, 3 Sept. 1955, ISA FM 2440/7.

[127] 'Effect of the Feda'iyiin Raids and the Czech Arms Deal in Jordan', L. D. Mallory (Amman) to Secretary of State, 25 Oct. 1955, NA RG 59, 684a.86/10-2555, Box 2692.

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The Egyptians, too, clearly regarded the August campaign as 'a huge success'—an assessment that coloured their decisions during the following months. The view in Cairo—as apparently expressed to a British diplomat by, among others, Minister of State Anwar Sadat—was that 'at last they have found a way of hitting back at the Israelis'.[128]

Most of the targets of the August Fedayeen campaign had been military. But a large number of the casualties had been civilians. The raiders, apparently, had been told to give military targets a preference. A prohibition against attacking civilians, if issued at all, appears to have been rather half-hearted and, in any case, was fairly meaningless, given that many of the attacks were night ambushes beside poorly lit roads.

The Khan Yunis Raid

The Israeli public was deeply shocked by the raids, especially the murderous deep-penetration attacks near Qubeiba.[129] The IDF General Staff and the Cabinet in Jerusalem were quickly galvanized into action. This time, it seemed less a matter of retaliation and revenge than deterrence: a telling blow might persuade Cairo to rein in the Fedayeen. Immediately after the start of the campaign on the night of 25/6 August, Dayan ordered front-line units to respond locally, by sniping at Arab farmers and shepherds across the border. Dayan's office diary indicates his certainty, at least on 26 August, that Ben-Gurion would not approve a large raid. He therefore proposed a series of pinprick raids, including ambushes, inside the Strip. But Ben-Gurion and Sharett decided to do nothing until the Cabinet met, on 28 August.

At the meeting, Dayan's proposal to blow up bridges on the Gaza—Rafiah road met with only a 'lukewarm' response. Instead, a consensus formed around smaller, squad-sized raids, for two or three nights in succession. At least one such raid went in that night, when Gur led an attack on a small army post near Rafah, killing three Egyptian soldiers. On 29 August Dayan went south to see off the commandos setting out on the follow-up raids. But, at the last minute, Sharett ordered the raids halted, following an appeal by the American Quaker leader Elmore

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[128] Trevelyan to Shuckburgh, 5 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-11904 VR1092/280. Trevelyan feared that this feeling of success had gone to the Egyptians' heads, and might result in fresh trouble.

[129] P. Westlake (Tel Aviv) to H. Macmillan, FO, 6 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-11904 VR1092/274.

Jackson, who had secretly mediated between Cairo and Jerusalem and now sought to launch new talks.[130]

But that night, 29/30 August, the Fedayeen struck hard, deep in Israel. Next morning, Dayan submitted his resignation, complaining of the divergence between the Cabinet's policy and his views: in these circumstances, he said, he could not 'take responsibility'. Ben-Gurion put Dayan's letter before the Mapai ministerial caucus and issued an ultimatum: the caucus must adopt a clear line—Sharett's or his own. The ministers declined to decide, and there was a twenty-four-hour stand-off. Meanwhile, further Fedayeen outrages were reported. Sharett caved in and, at a special Cabinet meeting he convened later that day (30 August), backed the large-scale strike Dayan proposed. The Cabinet agreed.[131]

The Israeli raid, originally scheduled for the night of 30/1 August, went in on the night of 31 August/1 September. Three paratroop companies participated. After a relatively heavy artillery barrage, a company on half-tracks, commanded by Rafael Eitan (later IDF CGS during the Lebanon War), stormed Egyptian army border Position 132, near the village of `Abasan. The position was found empty, the Egyptians having fled during the shelling. The main thrust, by a column of half-tracks led by Gur, pushed to the outskirts of Khan Yunis, where it attacked and blew up much of the town's Tegart police fort, which was held by two and a half companies of Palestinian troops, one of them, according to IDF intelligence, Fedayeen. Sappers also blew up a number of nearby installations, including a petrol station, railway tracks, telegraph poles, and houses. Operational orders for the raid (codenamed *Mivtza Elkayam*) called for 'killing as many enemy soldiers as possible' while explicitly prohibiting 'killing women and children'. Seventy-two Egyptians and Palestinians were killed and fifty-eight wounded. The IDF suffered one dead (at Position 132) and eleven wounded. The following morning, two Egyptian fighter aircraft were shot down by Israeli interceptors.[132]

Both the Americans and UN tried, and failed, to halt the Fedayeen campaign before the IDF's Khan Yunis raid. On 30 August Burns personally appealed to both sides to cease fire. Cairo agreed. According to some observers, by the end of August the Egyptians were in 'panic'; everyone feared the impending IDF reprisal.[133]

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[130] Dayan, *Avnei*, 151; Gur, 'Khan Yunis, Peluga BePshita', *Ma`arachot*, 176 (June 1966), 9. Milstein (*HaTzanhanim*, i. 328-9) maintains that Gur's raid took place on the night of 29/30 Aug., not 28/9 Aug., and was therefore in contravention of Sharett's instruction to desist from attacking. Either Milstein has confused the dates or Gur, who had ignored or not received the instruction to pull back and desist from attacking, gave the wrong date for the action in the article.

[131] Dayan, *Avnei*, 150-1.

[132] A full description of the main part of the raid is in Gur, *Peluga Dalet*, 200-19. See also M. Yanuka, *MiKibiya `ad HaMitle* (Tel Aviv, 1967), 91-8, and Dayan, *Avnei*, 151-2. The Egyptians claimed to have lost 36 dead and 13 wounded (Bums, *Arab and Israeli*, 90).

[133] British Embassy, Cairo, to FO, 1 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-113577 JE1913/26.

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But Israel, already decided on Khan Yunis, set 'impossible' conditions for a cease-fire, including an Egyptian admission of responsibility for the situation. On I September Bums appealed directly to the UN secretary general for Security Council intervention, also resubmitting to Israel and Egypt his list of proposals to relieve border tension.[134]

Several minor Fedayeen attacks occurred in the two days after Khan Yunis. It is possible that, by 1 September, the Egyptians had had enough, but could not communicate with squads already in Israel (the Fedayeen had no radios).[135] On 3 September Ben-Gurion proposed giving the United Nations (and the Egyptians) an ultimatum—that, if Fedayeen raiding was not halted, Israel would invade and occupy the whole or the northern half of the Gaza Strip.[136]

But Khan Yunis was enough. The Egyptians stopped the raids. Indeed, foreign observers feared that the success of Khan Yunis would reinforce Israel's conviction that retaliatory strikes were the only answer to Arab raiding. On 4 September both countries accepted the UN-sponsored cease-fire, and on 8 September a Security Council resolution endorsed some of Burns's proposals for relieving border tension.[137]

The Americans felt that 'both sides had behaved as badly as possible'.[138] But Shuckburgh felt that the Israelis had nicely judged their raid, having 'tailored it to be big enough to satisfy their people's demand for retribution . . . but not so big as to involve the outbreak of war.'[139]

Aftermaths

In the wake of the Fedayeen raids and Khan Yunis, Nasser greatly reinforced his troops in the Strip and central Sinai, prompting a partial IDF mobilization (*Mivtza Pil* (Operation Elephant)). But both countries stepped back from the brink.[140]

Khan Yunis also stirred the Arab world to offer at least verbal support to Egypt, with Jordan's Supreme Defence Council declaring that

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[134] 'Text of Telegram dated 1 Sept. 1955 from General Burns to the Secretary-General', PRO FO 371-115833; Burns, *Arab and Israeli*, 85-106; Westlake to Macmillan, 6 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-11904 VR1092/274; Dayan to Ben-Gurion, 5 Sept. 1955, ISA FM 2439/4.

[135] 'BMEO Weekly Political Summary No. 35 Week Ending Sept. 6 1955' (Nicosia), PRO FO 371-115464 V1013/39.

[136] Dayan, *Avnei*, 152.

[137] 'BMEO Weekly Political Summary No. 36 Week Ending Sept. 13, 1955', PRO FO 371-115464 V1013/40; Westlake to Macmillan, FO, 6 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-11904 VR1092/274; Burns, *Arab and Israeli*, 91.

[138] 'BMEO Weekly Political Summary No. 35 for Week Ending Sept. 6, 1955', PRO FO 371-115464 V1013/39.

[139] Shuckburgh to I. Kirkpatrick, 1 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-115847 VR1072/269.

[140] Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 28.

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abrogation of the armistice line on one front would mean 'abrogation in all sectors'.[141]

But the raid's major achievement—what had been its objective—was to halt the Egyptian Fedayeen campaign. The heavy Egyptian casualties coupled with Western pressure, stemming from a fear of escalation, combined to persuade Nasser to call it quits. The Egyptian government knew that their army was still no match for the IDF; further raiding would needlessly endanger Egyptian control of the Strip and, perhaps, the Egyptian army itself.

Nasser, therefore, opted for a 'political' response. On 12 September he announced a tightening of the blockade of the Straits of Tiran and the closure of the air space over the Gulf of `Aqaba to Israeli aircraft. El Al cancelled its flights to South Africa.

But Egypt also wanted more immediate revenge. Israel's response to the Fedayeen campaign proved to Nasser that he had found an effective weapon.[142] But, at the same time, he sought to avoid painful IDF reprisals. He, therefore, switched his attention to third countries and instructed his infiltrator controllers in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon to launch attacks from these countries. Within days, there were several raids across the Jordanian and Lebanese borders.

On the night of 6/7 September, five 'well-trained and armed saboteurs' crossed the Jordan into the Beit Shean area and planted explosives at a water-pumping installation, fish pool jetties, an agricultural grader, and an inspection hole in an irrigation system. They also cut telephone lines.[143]

But the most effective Fedayeen attacks were launched across the Lebanese border. On the night of 12/13 September three terrorists crossed the border and placed bombs next to two houses and a cowshed in Moshav `Alma, seriously damaging the structures but causing no casualties.[144] Ten days later, on 22 September, a four-man squad, crossing from the Lebanese village of Maroun ar Ras, fired automatic weapons and threw grenades at the Safad—Haifa bus near Meiron, killing two Israelis and wounding ten others. The dying driver had managed to halt the bus before it had plunged off a precipice.[145]

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[141] E. S. Duncan (Amman) to SecState, 4 Sept. 1955, NA RG 59 684a.86/9-455, Box 2692; P. Geren (Amman) to SecState, 1 Sept. 1955, NA RG 59, 684a.86/9-155, Box 2692.

[142] Sharett at this time called the 'daring' raids 'the most deadly means of combat the enemy has to hand, one can only wonder why he has not used them systematically before now' (*Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1165, entry for 23 Sept. 1955).

[143] Report by UNTSO on IJMAC meeting of 10 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-115858.

[144] Maj. A. Rabkin, Israel delegate to Israel-Lebanon MAC, to chairman ILMAC, 13 Sept. 1955, ISA FM 2433/1.

[145] Rabkin to chairman ILMAC, 24 Sept. 1955, ISA FM 2433/1; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1165, entry for 23 Sept. 1955.

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Both attacks were almost certainly organized by Egypt,[146] and the IDF claimed it had proof that the gang that had attacked earlier across the Jordanian border was also Egyptian-controlled.[147]

The Meiron attack posed a major dilemma for Israel. For years, the border with Lebanon had generally been quiet;[148] retaliating, and possibly inaugurating a cycle of violence here, might do Israel more harm than good, especially since the Lebanese were probably not responsible for the raiding. Nor, on the other hand, was there any definite proof of Egyptian responsibility, so punishing Egypt for attacks along the Lebanese border could not be embarked upon lightly.[149] Nasser's strategy of indirect attack clearly posed a dilemma for Israeli policy-makers.

The Lebanese, fearing IDF retaliation after the Meiron ambush, significantly reinforced their deployment along the border,[150] and on 23 September forbade the presence of 'strangers' inside a ten-kilometre-deep strip along the border. All Palestinian refugees were ordered out of the area 'within three days'.[151]

Ben-Gurion instructed Dayan to leave Lebanon alone, so long as the Lebanese took 'energetic measures' to curb infiltration. But Ben-Gurion thought they should be asked to compensate the families of the Meiron bus victims. Sharett baulked at the proposal, calling it 'unprecedented'. He suspected that Dayan was looking for 'any excuse' to attack Lebanon. Lebanon had failed to detain suspects Israel had named in connection with the recent attacks, and Dayan demanded a firm reprisal against the Lebanese village of Maroun ar Ras, which, he felt, would compel the Lebanese to curb the 'Syrian—Egyptian' agents and their local gangs. But Sharett stood firm. Ben-Gurion, who supported Dayan, backed down in the face of Sharett's determination. He probably sensed that the Cabinet would go with Sharett, if it came to a vote.[152]

In the end, stepped-up Lebanese security measures, including the arrest

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[146] Wikeley to FO, 26 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-115859 VR1073/241; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1164, 1172, entries for 22 and 27 Sept. 1955. The Lebanese army chief of staff said that the terrorists were Palestinian refugees 'instigated by an Egyptian' (I. D. Scott (Beirut) to FO, 5 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115905 VR1091/320).

[147] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1153, 1163, entries for 11 and 22 Sept. 1955.

[148] However, in summer 1954 a gang of terrorists had been active along the border, firing at a Kibbutz Hanita tractor (21 July) and ambushing a truck between Manara and Yiftah (3 Aug.) (Capt. S. Reichman to IDF General Staff officer for MACs, 26 July 1954, ISA FM2433/3; 'Summary Record of the 169th Meeting (Emergency)' of ILMAC, 6 Aug. 1954, ISA FM 2432/8).

[149] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1164, 1166, entries for 22 and 23 Sept. 1955.

[150] Scott to FO, 5 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115905 VR1092/320.

[151] British Embassy, Beirut, to FO, 28 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-115848 VR1072/280; 'Memorandum of Conversation' (Hassan Sa'b, Lebanese *chargé d'affaires* in Washington, R. Hare, acting assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs, and F. Boardman), 4 Oct. 1955, NA RG 59, 684a.86/10-455 CS/S, Box 2692.

[152] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1164, 1166-7, 1169-70, 1172-4, 1177, entries for 22-5, 27, and 28 Sept. 1955.

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of a handful of veteran infiltrators, brought renewed calm to Israel's northern border.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian army continued intelligence-gathering sorties across the line into southern Israel—either in preparation for further Fedayeen raids or to monitor Israeli troop movements and possible aggressive intentions. Two intelligence-gathering squads were captured by IDF patrols on 15 and 16 September near the former Palestinian villages of Sumsum and Najd. The infiltrators, all Palestinian, had worn Fedayeen-type hats and carried Sten guns.[153] The murder on 4 October of an Israeli tractor driver and the wounding of two others near Moshav Gilat may have been carried out by another Gaza-based squad whose main purpose was intelligence-gathering. After the murder, the infiltrators fled east, to Jordan, rather than back to the Strip. Israeli investigators said the dead man had been hit by a bullet from a Karl Gustav, a Swedish sub-machine-gun in use by the Egyptian army. The killers appear to have been given an official welcome in Jordan.[154]

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[153] Ibid. iv. 1156, entry for 19 Sept. 1955; Tekoah to Israel missions, London, etc., 21 Sept. 1955, ISA FM 2439/4.

[154] British Embassy, Tel Aviv, to Levant Department, FO, 10 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115905 VR1092/326; Westlake to Dudgeon, British Embassy, Amman, 22 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115906; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1190, entry for 5 Oct. 1955.

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12
The Slide to War

DMZ Troubles: Israel, Egypt, and Syria, October-December 1955

The Israel—Egypt DMZ, October—November 1955

The IDF raid on Gaza triggered a qualitative and quantitative rise in the level of Israeli—Arab, and specifically Israeli—Egyptian, hostility and violence. Egypt responded to the raid by a policy of low-level harassment along the frontiers and by the conclusion of a major weapons deal with the Soviet Union, the Czech arms deal. Israel, for its part, decided (*a*) also to acquire major new armaments, and (*b*) to confront and destroy the Egyptian army before it became too strong.

But more than a year was to pass before these developments led to war. Following the IDF raid on Khan Yunis, Egypt put a clamper on raiding from the Gaza Strip; it was simply too vulnerable there so long as its army had not received and absorbed the new Soviet arms. But Cairo was not averse to continuing low-level attacks on Israel along other frontiers. Following Nasser's public announcement of the Czech deal in September, Israel sought a means of provoking a war with Egypt. The focus shifted to the DMZ on the Sinai—Negev frontier.

During August—November 1955 both sides (but mainly Israel) took steps that led to the brink of war: Israel, for a period, behaved as if it were spoiling for a major fight; Egypt as if it were not averse. But both, as we shall see, stepped back from the brink. In both Ben-Gurion's and Nasser's estimation, the time was not yet ripe, the circumstances not yet optimal.

While Egypt's actions in the DMZ were linked to the general level of Israeli—Egyptian tension, they had their roots in local circumstances and in conflicting interpretations of the Israel—Egypt armistice agreement of 1949.

The armistice agreement provided for an extensive triangular-shaped DMZ east of the old Egypt—Palestine international frontier around the oasis of al Auja, some fifty kilmetres south-east of Rafah. Both Israel and Egypt were barred from deploying troops there. The zone was not formally designated part of Israel, though Israel, from the first, interpreted the agreement to mean that it had sovereignty over the area. Egypt, for its part, increasingly related to the DMZ as no man's land, and certainly not

as sovereign Israeli territory. A similarly sized triangle, inside Sinai, west of al Auja and the old international frontier, whose apex was at Abu Agheila, was designated an Egyptian limited forces zone in which Cairo was prohibited from setting up defensive positions. Al Auja was the seat of the EIMAC, with the two countries alternately providing civilian guards for the headquarters. (The armistice agreement also provided for a limitation of forces elsewhere along the line.)[1]

Before 1948 `Azazme and Tarrabin bedouin tribesmen had lived in and around al Auja. During the war, they had fled, mostly to Sinai, and by February—March 1949 the DMZ was virtually uninhabited. But later hundreds of bedouin families gradually moved back into the DMZ, apparently 'encouraged to infiltrate and settle the area by the Egyptians, for political reasons'.[2]

In the early 1950s a series of incidents, including minings, had prompted Israel to expel thousands of bedouins who lived in and around the DMZ to Sinai. It allowed only a number of clans regarded as 'pro-Israeli' to remain in the zone, though many others seasonally infiltrated back into the zone without permission. The DMZ remained relatively quiet until September 1953.[3] Then, alleging bedouin violations of the armistice agreement and the need to increase security in the zone, the IDF again raided the area, attacked several bedouin encampments (killing animals and burning tents),[4] and established an IDF Na"hal outpost, named Giv`at Rachel (later Ketzi`ot), next to al Auja (which Israel began calling Nitzana). The September raiding was preceded in July and August by IDF air attacks on bedouin encampments at Bir al Malaqi in the DMZ, in which a bedouin and several camels were killed.[5]

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[1] Israeli maps, including official IDF maps, during the 1950s were generally incorrect and misleading, treating the DMZ and the Egyptian limited forces zone as one unit which spanned the border, stretching from Abu Agheila (Sinai-Egypt) to Hill 405 (Negev-Israel). Both triangular areas were thus, in effect, described and treated as one large DMZ. Subsequent Israeli cartography, as in *DFPI* iii, facing p. 138, followed suit. The maps in Wallach and Lissak (eds.), *Atlas*, 68, 93, 112-13, 118, 120, are similarly incorrect and misleading. The armistice agreement defined the Abu Agheila—Al Quseima area west of the DMZ as a limited-forces area in which the Egyptians were barred only from establishing 'defensive positions'. (They were not barred, for example, from sending in military patrols—as Israel was barred from doing in the DMZ.)

[2] 'The Bedouin in the DMZ', part of a memorandum, perhaps by IDF Intelligence Branch undated (but from the second half of 1953), ISA FM 2436/7 bet.

[3] 'Report on the DMZ and its Inhabitants 1948-53', unsigned (but probably by either IDF Intelligence Dept. or Foreign Ministry Research Dept.), 12 Aug. 1953, ISA FM 2439/1. In Sept. 1952 the IDF raided the DMZ, killing twenty-eight bedouins and carrying off several hundred sheep after a shepherd was murdered and a flock stolen in Kibbutz Sdeh Boqer, east of the DMZ ('Activities on the Borders; Summaries and Conclusions for the Month of Sept. 1952', IDF Intelligence Dept., 14 Oct. 1952, ISA FM 2432/3).

[4] Col. T. M. Hinkle (USMC), chairman of EIMAC, to senior Israeli delegate to EIMAC, 21 Sept. 1953, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-97, EIMAC Current 1953.

[5] W. T. McAninch to A. Cordier (for Bennike), 30 Oct. 1955, UNA DAG-1/2.2.5.2.0-1.

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Ketzi`ot, which eventually (like most such Na"hal outposts) became a civilian kibbutz, functioned as a military base. Israel claimed that it was a civilian settlement, and therefore did not infringe the demilitarization provisions of the armistice agreement. Egypt complained that the outpost violated the status quo and the agreement.

During 1954 the Na"hal troops at Ketzi`ot regularly patrolled the DMZ and the area remained basically quiet.[6] At the same time, in response to Ketzi`ot, Egypt established three 'checkposts'—Israel called them military 'positions'—along the DMZ border (to curb smuggling, the Egyptians said). The UN chairman of the EIMAC ruled that the 'checkposts' were not military 'defensive positions' and did not therefore violate the armistice accord.[7] On 24 December 1954 a small Egyptian unit crossed the frontier and established a position inside the DMZ, withdrawing only after an EIMAC condemnation. On 29 December an Israeli unit fired at one of the Egyptian checkposts.

Following the hangings in Cairo, the Gaza Raid, and the general deterioration along the Gaza border, incidents in the DMZ multiplied. Israeli (non-Na"hal) troops frequently entered the zone, and soldiers from both sides often fired across the line at each other's positions.

One cause of incidents was lack of clarity about the exact course of the frontier on the western edge of the DMZ. In July 1955 Israel began to mark the border with concrete pillars. According to the Israeli markings, two Egyptian 'checkposts' were on the 'Israeli' side of the line, that is, inside the DMZ. But the Egyptians stayed put. After the Mefalsim position incident of 22 August, the Egyptians destroyed twenty-one of the Israeli border markers.

On 20 September Sharett, Ben-Gurion, and Dayan met to discuss the DMZ problem. Dayan pressed for an attack on the Egyptian positions. But Sharett and Ben-Gurion decided on open military occupation of the DMZ, with withdrawal contingent on the dismantling of the Egyptian positions on the 'Israeli' side of the line. On the night of 20/1 September, Israeli units occupied Nitzana (al Auja), taking over the EIMAC headquarters and imprisoning the Egyptian compound guards after wounding two of them.[8]

The Israelis dug trenches and planted minefields. They said that the

[6] Lt.-Col. A. Shalev, IDF General Staff officer for MACs, to DMI, etc., 12 Jan. 1954, ISA FM 2439/1.

[7] Lt.-Col. Y. Nursella to Y. Tekoah, DMI, etc., 8 Aug. 1955, ISA FM 2439/4.

[8] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1156-7, 1158-9, entries for 20 and 21 Sept. 1955. At a meeting with Ben-Gurion and Dayan, Sharett privately expressed 'horror' at the shooting of the two Egyptians, which was 'a wild deviation from a clear and explicit agreement'. The army later told Sharett, who was still prime minister, that what had happened had been 'a grave crime' and not in accordance with the unit's orders (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1161-2, entries for 21 and 22 Sept. 1955).

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troops would be withdrawn when the two Egyptian positions on the 'Israeli' side of the line were evacuated. Egypt agreed to Burns's request to withdraw its troops, but Israel then upped the ante and made its own withdrawal conditional on the dismantling of all the 'checkposts' or 'defensive positions' in the Egyptian limited forces zone, on Egyptian non-interference with the Israeli border-marking, and on a general Egyptian agreement to observe the cease-fire in the DMZ and the Gaza area.

Burns mediated an agreement, and on 2 October the Egyptians withdrew from the positions in the DMZ with Israel when withdrawing the bulk of its forces from the zone. But UN observers noted that armed Israelis remained in several sites and that Israel had not only not removed but had increased the number of minefields in the zone. The Israelis said that minefields were non-military, 'routine security precautions' of Kibbutz Ketzi`ot.

On 26 October Egyptian troops raided an Israeli 'police' outpost at Birein (Be'erotayim) near al Sabha, 200 metres inside the DMZ, killing one Israeli, wounding four, and taking two prisoner. The raid was apparently Egypt's reply to Israel's capture of five Syrian soldiers near the Bnot Ya`akov Bridge on 23 October. Egypt and Syria had signed a mutual defence agreement on 19 October, and Nasser apparently felt that he had to demonstrate solidarity. On the following days, 27 and 28 October, Egypt pushed more troops into the DMZ.

It was dear, even to Sharett—still the prime minister and on a visit to Paris—that Israel would have to retaliate.[9] The attack on Kuntilla (*Mivtza Egged*) took place, on the night of 27/8 October. But it was not merely a matter of tit-for-tat or of ejecting Egyptians from the zone. As we have already noted, Ben-Gurion and Dayan had decided four days earlier, in reaction to news of the Czech arms deal, to provoke war with Egypt, using retaliatory strikes that would push Egypt into counter-attacking and give Israel grounds for launching a war. This aim was to underlie the three major retaliatory strikes of October—December 1955, Kuntilla, al Sabha, and *Mivtza `Alei Zayit*.[10]

Two hundred paratroopers, commanded by Sharon, stormed the Kuntilla police fort, three kilometres inside Sinai, about midway between Eilat and the DMZ. The raiders, destroying the buildings and fifteen vehicles, killed twelve Egyptian troops, wounded six, and took twenty-nine prisoners (to exchange for the two captured Israeli policemen). Two Israelis were killed and two wounded. Ben-Gurion's pre-raid guidelines provided for a strike

[9] 'Incidents in the El Auja D/Z and Neighbouring Areas', UNTSO HQ, undated, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-95, EIMAC Birein Incident, 26 Oct. 1955; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1251, entry for 26 Oct. 1955.

[10] Discussed more fully in Ch. 9. See also Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 54-89.

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against Khan Yunis and Rafah if the Egyptians retaliated; if they attacked Israeli targets from the air, the Israeli air force was to bomb Egypt's Canal-side air bases. With this in mind, Dayan instructed the IDF General Staff to plan for the 'conquest of northern Sinai' in the event of Egyptian retaliation. The IDF had mobilized some 8,000 troops in case of an escalation that Dayan dearly wanted and planned to exploit. 'All impatiently awaited Nasser's reaction,' recalled Mordechai Bar-On, then Dayan's *chef de bureau*.[11]

Probably in retaliation for Kuntilla, an Egyptian commando force tried to capture an IDF outpost near Kibbutz Nirim, near the Gaza border, on the night of 28/9 October, but was discovered and retreated under fire without inflicting any casualties.[12]

Kuntilla failed to prompt the withdrawal of the Egyptians dug in in the DMZ. On 31 October, with Sharett still absent in Europe, the Mapai ministerial caucus—Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir, Eshkol, and Aranne—decided to end the DMZ affair once and for all by expelling the Egyptians. Acting Prime Minister Eshkol baulked, seeking a delay until Sharett could be consulted. But Ben-Gurion, about to assume the premiership having just negotiated a new coalition government, wanted immediate action. He was adamant; the caucus acquiesced. But the caucus was probably not informed that Ben-Gurion's main aim was to provoke Egypt into war.

Sharett, back from Europe and on his last day as prime minister (2 November), expressed doubts about 'the timing': Ben-Gurion, presenting his new government to the Knesset, had only that day proposed meeting Nasser to negotiate peace. 'Ben-Gurion, of course, saw no logical contradiction between the verbal political demonstration and the practical military action,' Sharett commented in his diary.[13] Indeed, Ben-Gurion's public peace proposal may well have been designed, at least in part, to put the Egyptians off their guard.

On the night of 2/3 November, the IDF launched a multi-pronged, brigade-sized attack (*Mivtza Har Ga`ash* (Operation Volcano)) against Egyptian positions on both sides of the border. The action, at al Sabha and Wadi Siram, took place despite a pledge from Israel to Burns that it

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[11] 'Incidents in the E1 Auja D/Z and Neighbouring Areas', UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-95; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1258-9, 1260, entries for 28 and 29 Oct. 1955; Dayan, *Avnei*, 157-8, 162-4; Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 44-5; Sharon, *Warrior*, 114-18. Drori ('Mediniyut HaGmul', 75) says that Sharon expanded the Kuntilla Raid without General Staff authorization, and that he was reprimanded for this at a post-operation General Staff discussion. According to Drori, Sharon was accused of dragging the IDF and the Cabinet into unplanned initiatives.

[12] Giacomaggi, chairman of EIMAC, to Col. R. E. Hommel, acting chief of staff, UNTSO, 29 Oct. 1955, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-95 El Kuntilla.

[13] Dayan, *Avnei*, 158-9; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1280, entry for 2 Nov. 1955.

would refrain from anything that might 'aggravate the situation' during his absence for consultations with Hammarskjold in New York. The paratroop battalion, trainees of the Na"hal's NCO course, a battalion of the Golani Brigade, and two reserve paratroop companies took part. Eighty-one Egyptian soldiers were killed and fifty-five captured. Five IDF men died and thirty-five were wounded. All the Egyptian positions were captured and destroyed.[14]

Following the raid, Israel's largest since the 1948 war, the Israeli Foreign Ministry tersely announced: 'There is no place in Israel for Egyptian troops. They belong in Egypt and they should go back there. If they do not go of their own free will, they must be pushed back.'[15] Sharett, despite misgivings, had been persuaded of the need for the attack—'unless we were willing to aquiesce in the extrusion of the Nitzana area from our sovereign territory'.[16]

During the raid, Dayan had asked Ben-Gurion for permission to leave the assaulting IDF units in the captured positions on the Egyptian side of the line for twenty-four hours—in the hope that the Egyptians would retaliate, giving Israel the opportunity to escalate. But Ben-Gurion refused, apparently apprehensive about Western reactions, and the troops destroyed and left the Egyptian positions that night. On 3 November the Egyptian army, as expected, 'attacked' and reoccupied the Sabha positions on the Egyptian side of the line from which the IDF had withdrawn a few hours earlier.[17]

On 3 November Bums and Hammarskjold issued proposals for easing the situation: completion of the frontier-marking along the DMZ; removal of all (Israeli) military personnel, obstacles, and mines from the DMZ, and 'restriction' of Egyptian 'checkposts and defended posts' in Sinai west of the DMZ; and limitation of Israeli personnel in the DMZ to 'inhabitants of the kibbutz' and '30' civilian policemen. Both sides accepted in principle but added riders and reservations, and, in fact, failed to implement them, leaving the *de facto* militarization by Israel of the DMZ and the *de facto* over-militarization of the facing Egyptian area in place until the outbreak of the Sinai-Suez War at the end of October 1956. But, after the Sabha raid, a *de facto* cease-fire prevailed in and along the DMZ until the war.[18]

Nevertheless, the major clashes of October—November 1955 along the Sinai—Negev border, Egypt's repeated humiliation and the demonstrations of IDF superiority, and the continuing dispute over the DMZ all contributed

[14] 'Incidents in the El Auja D/Z and Neighbouring Areas', UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-95; Gur, *Peluga Dalet*, 224-9.

[15] 'El Auja Demilitarized Zone', 25 Apr. 1957, UNA DAG-1/2.14-B48, E1 Auja Demilitarized Zone, UNTSO.

[16] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1284, entry for 3 Nov. 1955.

[17] Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 45-6. The Egyptian media announced that some 200 IDF troops had been killed in the 'counter-attack'.

[18] 'El Auja Demilitarized Zone', UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-b.48.

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to the deteriorating relations between Israel and Egypt during the following year.

The Northern Border DMZs and Mivtza `Alei Zayit

The Israel-Syria DMZs, 1949-1955

The July 1949 Israeli-Syrian armistice agreement provided *inter alia* for the creation of limited ('defensive') forces areas on both sides of the frontier, to a depth of five or ten kilometres, and the creation of three DMZs to the west of the old Palestine-Syria international frontier. The DMZs, though on the 'Israeli' side of the old frontier, were not designated Israeli territory, though Israel, from the start, understood them to be its sovereign (if demilitarized) territory, as it did the DMZ in the western Negev. The accord also provided for 'locally recruited civilian police' to administer law and order inside the DMZs—Israelis in the Jewish settlements and Arabs in the Arab villages within the zones. From the start, the Syrians, like the Egyptians in the South, maintained that the areas were a form of no man's land, and certainly not sovereign Israeli territory.

There was a small, northern zone between Banias and Kibbutz Dan; a larger, central DMZ running from the Darbashiya-Lake Hula line south along the lake's eastern shore, expanding into a large triangle around Mishmar HaYarden and then narrowing to a strip between the east bank of the Jordan River and the old international frontier, down to the Jordan estuary, where the river flowed into the Sea of Galilee; and a third (the largest) DMZ, running along the south-eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, to a depth of two or three kilometres, from just north of Kibbutz `Ein Gev through the Arab village of As Samra to the Yarmuk River, and then eastwards along the Yarmuk to, and including, al Hamma.

The situation in, and the status of, the DMZs were the major points of friction between Israel and Syria between the signing of the armistice agreement and the end of 1956.[19]

Between July 1949 and March 1951 there was almost no infiltration from Syria, due to the latter's strict border controls, and there were almost no shooting incidents between Syrian and Israeli troops. But there was some political jockeying for influence in and over the DMZs, mainly focusing on the composition of the local police forces, their powers, and their presence, and the sale of produce by the zones' Arabs. The 2,000-3,000 Arab villagers proved something of a nuisance, as well as an impediment to the imposition of full Israeli sovereignty. They occasionally stole from

[19] In large measure, the following description is based on Shalev, *Shituf-Pe`ula*, the most comprehensive and accurate study to date of Israeli-Syrian border relations, 1949-55.

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their Jewish neighbours and engaged in smuggling (and, Israel suspected, spying for the Syrians). Israel began subtly and not so subtly, by systematic petty persecution, to pressure them to move to Syria, succeeding to some extent in the southern DMZ (As Samra, Tel al Qasser).[20]

Israel's economically and politically motivated launching of the Hula area drainage and irrigation project in January-March 1951, in effect an assertion of Israeli sovereignty in the central DMZ, set off three months of hostilities, which were followed by two and a half years of relative quiet.[21]

The hostilities were sparked by Israel's use of earth-moving tractors, beginning on 13 March, in the 100-metre wide strip of land on the *east* bank of the Jordan River, part of the DMZ and west of the old international frontier—an area that Syria had traditionally desired and claimed. The Syrians began shooting at the tractors on 15 March, heralding the start of efforts to stop the whole drainage scheme. The United Nations mediated a temporary halt to the earth work along the Jordan, but, on the morning of 25 March, just one day after an Israeli representative had for the first time defined the DMZs as 'sovereign Israeli' territory, Israel resumed work on the west bank of the river. Syrian troops and irregulars began sniping at the tractors[22] and continued for the next several days.

On 30 March Israel's leaders decided to continue the work, come what may; to assert Israeli sovereignty over the DMZs through a variety of measures, including 'the transfer of Arab civilians from the area to Israeli territory'; and to achieve a cease-fire.[23] That night, Israel forcibly transferred the 800 inhabitants of Kirad al Baqqara and Kirad al Ghannama, the two Arab villages in the central DMZ, to the village of Sha`b, near Acre. The remaining villagers of As Samra and Nuqeib left the southern DMZ, following Israeli pressures and Syrian calls for them to leave.[24]

Israel also resolved to assert its sovereignty over al Hamma—a site included by the 1949 agreement in the southern DMZ but which Israel had never patrolled or occupied. On 4 April 1951 the IDF General Staff

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[20] S. Ramati to Gen. M. Makleff, 8 Mar. 1951, ISA FM 2433/5.

[21] Shalev, *Shituf-Pe`ula*, 149-50.

[22] Special Duties Officer (Ka"tam), Northern Base, to (?), IDF Northern Command, undated, relaying the text of an order from 24 Mar. 1951 by the Syrian chief of staff, Zayim Anwar Banud, to the commander of the Third Brigade, ordering him to arm and deploy 250 refugees from the Kuneitra area in the Hula to harass Israelis working on the drainage and irrigation project, ISA FM 2433/5.

[23] 'Summary of Meeting with the Prime Minister Concerning the Hula (30.3.51)', ISA FM 2433/5; Shalev, *Shituf-Pe`ula*, 166-7.

[24] The Israeli authorities then pressured the Kirad Arabs to remain in Sha`b rather than return to the DMZ, as a subsequent UN decision allowed them to do ('Policy with Regard to Sha`ab', Ramati to Makleff, etc., 4 July 1951, ISA FM 2433/9 (2)). But many returned to the DMZ. They were finally ejected by Israel in 1956, the majority crossing over to Syria and a small number joining relatives who had preferred to remain in Sha`b. The sites were then destroyed and ploughed over (Burns, *Arab and Israeli*, 115-18).

dispatched a two-vehicle patrol on the winding, narrow road along the Yarmuk River to al Hamma, over the objections of Northern Command, which believed Syria was likely to attack the patrol and trap the troops in an ambush. And that is exactly what happened: seven Israeli soldiers were killed.[25]

That day, an emergency session of the Cabinet empowered Ben-Gurion to authorize the bombing of the Syrian police station at al Hamma and the position that had ambushed the patrol, and the demolition of the now empty houses in Kirad al Ghannama, Kirad al Baqqara, As Samra, and Nuqeib in order, once and for all, to render the DMZs 'clear of Arabs'.[26] The following day, four IDF aircraft bombed the Syrian position at al Hadid and the al Hamma police station. Two women were killed and six people injured.

The al Hamma-Hula incidents ended with a *de facto* division of the DMZs, with Syria gaining control of al Hamma and its corridor, the Tawafiq heights, Nuqeib and the north-eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, the whole strip of land on the east bank of the Jordan River between the Sea of Galilee and Lake Hula, a strip on the eastern shore of Lake Hula and the whole of the northern DMZ, and Israel taking all the rest (the bulk of the southern DMZ and the whole of the central DMZ west of the Jordan River). The Syrians also began fishing in the Sea of Galilee, which was wholly sovereign Israeli territory according to the armistice agreement. Israel continued its drainage project in the Hula area and west of the Jordan River.

But there was to be one further, climactic round of clashes before the Israeli-Syrian border returned to its former tranquillity. As the UN Security Council was considering the al Hamma incidents, a Syrian force— dressed as irregulars—tried to occupy the hilly area west of the DMZ where the Jordan River flows into the Sea of Galilee. There were two Arab villages in the area, Khirbet ad Dikka, east of the Jordan, in the north, and Shamalina (the main concentration of the bedouin tribe `Arab al Shamalina at Khirbet Abu Zeina, just west of the Jordan, to the south, almost at the meeting-point of the river and the sea). The Syrians, fearful that Israel would drive out these villagers as they had done those of Kirad al Baqqara and Kirad al Ghannama, tried to seize the hills, principally Tel al Mutilla, that dominated them to the west.

On 2 May 1951 a force of Syrian 'irregulars' and armed Shamalina tribesmen occupied three strategic hills. Tel al Mutilla, the 'Shefekh'

[25] Shalev (*Shituf-Pe`ula*, 168-73) contains the fullest and most honest treatment of the al Hamma patrol yet published. The patrol was ostensibly composed of policemen, as Israel was not allowed to have troops in the DMZ.

[26] 'Protocol of the Cabinet Meeting of 5 April 1951', ISA Record Group 77, 7263/11; Shalev, *Shituf-Pe`ula*, 173.

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Position, and the 'Dmut' Position (the last two inside the DMZ), the Israeli platoon on the first hill losing four men before being driven out. The incident was triggered by an Israeli patrol's attempt to confiscate a herd of Syrian cattle (the Syrians had apparently introduced the herd, with its armed guard, into the area as a provocation). That night, another Israeli unit took Tel al Mutilla, which the Syrians had temporarily left unoccupied.[27] Golani Brigade reinforcements managed to take the 'Shefekh' Position the following day, and withstood fierce Syrian counter-attacks at Tel al Mutilla, but failed to take the 'Dmut' Position. The stalemate continued on 4 and 5 May, until, on 6 May, Golani units at last took the 'Dmut' Position and all Syrian units retreated back across the Jordan. 'The battle of Tel al Mutilla' was over, the IDF having suffered some forty dead in five days.[28] In 1952 the Shamalina were expelled from the DMZ after the murder of a member of Kibbutz Hulata.[29]

Things remained relatively quiet along the Syrian-Israeli border until late 1953-early 1954, when terrorist sorties from Syria and occasional firefights between Israeli and Syrian front-line troops increased. Occasional Syrian fire at Israelis fishing in the north-eastern corner of the Sea of Galilee, which was sovereign Israeli territory, was another problem. Often, the incidents were local and due to problems along the DMZs which secret Israeli-Syrian negotiations had failed to resolve. But, to some degree, they also reflected the general drift towards anti-Israel activism among the Arab States, primarily Egypt.[30]

Mivtza `Alei Zayit

In the course of 1955, the Israeli-Syrian problem became entangled in the web of Israeli-Egyptian relations and in Israel's desire to knock out the Egyptian army. From Jerusalem's point of view, the 19 October signing of the Egyptian-Syrian defence pact gave an added dimension to the threat that Egypt and Egyptian-led Arab radicalism posed to Israel's security, and also turned Syria, a potential major enemy, into fair game.

Ben-Gurion and Dayan had failed to provoke war with Egypt during October-November (Kuntilla and the Sabha); perhaps Egypt could be drawn by an attack on its ally, Syria? This was the thinking behind the strike (*Mivtza `Alei Zayit—Operation* Olive Leaves or Kinneret) launched by the IDF on the night of 11/12 December 1955. The brigade-sized assault

[27] 'Daily Activities Report', Maj. D. Sinai in the name of director of Intelligence Dept., to deputy CGS, etc., 3 May 1951, ISA FM 2433/7.

[28] A political analysis of the Tel al Mutilla battles is to be found in 'A Political-Military Background Analysis of the Mutilla and 'Dmut' [Position] Battles and their Development', Capt. A. Friedlander (Shalev), 2 July 1951, ISA FM 2433/9(1).

[29] 'Syria', unsigned and undated report, possibly by IDF, ISA FM 2433/10(1).

[30] Shalev, *Shituf-Pe`ula*, 257 ff.

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on a string of Syrian positions along the north-eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee was not preceded by any major Syrian depredations or by a steadily worsening border situation. Indeed, to many Israelis, including several Cabinet ministers, the massive attack seemed a bolt from the blue. According to IDF documentation, *Mivtza `Alei Zayit* 'had not been preceded by any specific provocation by the Syrians' or by an increase in Syrian attacks or by a deteriorating border situation.[31]

On 10 December, the day before the raid, the Syrians had fired on an Israeli police vessel approaching the lake's eastern shore. But there were no casualties. The vessel had apparently been sent specifically to provoke Syrian fire.[32] Ben-Gurion had approved *Mivtza `Alei Zayit* in meetings with Dayan on 8 and 11 December. He had not consulted or informed the Cabinet. Sharett, abroad at the time, was to write, bitterly, a few days later: 'Ben-Gurion the defence minister consulted with Ben-Gurion the [acting] foreign minister and received the green light from Ben-Gurion the prime minister.'[33]

At the 8 December meeting, it was Dayan who at one point proposed shelling Syrian villages in retaliation for the shelling of Israeli vessels. But Ben-Gurion, preferring a more provocative course, decided on the cross-border assault on the Syrian positions.[34]

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[31] 'Report of an Investigation into Operation "`Alei Zayit"', IDF General Staff, undated (but from early 1956); Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1346-7, entry for 13 Feb. 1956. Israel alleged that there had been twenty-five Syrian attacks on Israeli vessels, patrols, and settlements in the ten months preceding the reprisal, though these had, apparently, caused no Israeli deaths (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1519, speech delivered on 28 June 1956); `Arab Aggression and Israeli Counter-Action', unsigned and undated FM memo., but with covering note by Tekoah, 29 Aug. 1956, ISA FM 2949/4). Uzi Narkiss (*Hayal shel Yerushalayim* (Tel Aviv, 1991), 164) mistakenly alleges that an intensification of Syrian attacks had preceded the raid.

[32] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1346-7, entry for 13 Feb. 1956.

[33] Ibid. v. 1309-10, entry for 16 Dec. 1955.

[34] Dayan, *Avnei*, 169-70. Criticism of the raid moved Ben-Gurion to reconsider the decision-making process. He concluded that, henceforward, 'matters that could cause arguments and differences of opinion within the Cabinet' should be decided by the full Cabinet, not by himself alone in his dual capacity as prime minister and defence minister (protocol of Mapai Political Committee meeting, 28 Dec. 1955, LPA 26/55). Ben-Gurion was clearly stung by the criticism of the operation in *HaAretz's* editorial of 16 Dec. On 2 Jan. 1956 he told the Knesset:

> I know there is a difference between the owners and reporters of an important newspaper and fishermen in the Kinneret. The owner of the newspaper [i.e. Gershom Schocken] is well-to-do, an educated man and an important [political] figure, and the Kinneret fishermen are simple working people . . . . But the government of Israel must protect the life of the simple fisherman . . . and also protect its sovereign rights over the Sea of Galilee no less than in Tel Aviv. (*Divrei HaKnesset*, xix, pt. 2 (2 Jan. 1956), 675.

He wrote to Eban in the same vein: the operation was geared to protecting the lives and fishing rights of Israel's Galilee fishermen (Ben-Gurion to Eban, 19 Dec. 1955, BGA). But, in fact, *Mivtza `Alei Zayit* had nothing, or very little, to do with the fishermen's plight and everything to do with Ben-Gurion's and Dayan's efforts to trap Nasser into war. As Dayan obliquely phrased it at the 8 Dec. consultation: 'I don't care if I don't solve the fishing

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An additional minor reason for the assault was the IDF's desire to capture Syrian soldiers for exchange for four Israeli soldiers who had been in Syrian hands since December 1954.[35]

Mivtza `Alei Zayit, commanded by Sharon from a boat in the Sea of Galilee, was a complex and highly successful operation. The attacking force included two paratroop battalions and a number of artillery and mortar batteries. One force, under Davidi, crossed the Jordan, where it flows in a swamp-like area into the Sea of Galilee, and took the Syrians' 'Estuary Position' and the nearby 'Bek House'. A second, seaborne force, commanded by Yitzhak ('Gulliver') Ben-Menahem (who died in the raid), stormed the Syrian positions at Kafr Aaqeb and Sheikh Khodar, on the north-eastern shore. The third and largest force pushed north from `Ein Gev, taking a chain of Syrian positions at Nuqeib and el Koursi, which they blew up before withdrawing with a relatively large quantity of Syrian weaponry and ammunition. Syrian casualties were fifty-four dead (including six civilians, three of them women) and thirty prisoners. Six Israelis were killed and fourteen wounded.[36]

The operation appears to have gone beyond its original scope, of capturing and destroying a smaller number of Syrian positions. At one point, indeed, Ben-Gurion defined *Mivtza `Alei Zayit* as 'too successful'. But it is unclear who was responsible—Sharon, Dayan, or Ben-Gurion— for the expansion of the raid beyond the goals set out at the 8 December meeting.[37]

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problem. The Egyptians are afraid that we will enter into a conflict with Syria, and that they, by virtue of the [Egyptian-Syrian mutual defence] agreement [of 19 Oct. 1955], will have to do something. They will have to take the first step to aggression' (quoted in Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 84).

[35] The four were members of a five-man IDF intelligence team that had crossed into Syria on 8 Dec. 1954 to check or change batteries in an intelligence bug on a Syrian telephone line in the Golan Heights. The five were caught, interrogated, and tortured. One, Uri Ilan, the son of a former Mapam MK, committed suicide in a Syrian jail on 13 Jan. 1955. The Syrians refused to release the remaining four, despite Western intercession and repeated Israeli goodwill gestures, such as the release of seven Syrian seamen who had strayed into Israeli waters in summer 1955. Israeli officials believed the affair had caused some nervousness among the Syrian military on the Golan. This partly explained the increase of shooting incidents along the border. The hardening of Syria's attitude to the four (Syrian 'beastliness', as one British official had defined it) was among the reasons for Israel's decision to launch *`Alei Zayit. The* Israeli assessment was accurate. In Mar. 1956 Syria traded the four for forty Syrians who had fallen into Israeli hands (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 648-52, 657, entries for 13 and 16 Jan. 1955; S. Tawil to Y. Tekoah, 11 Feb. 1955, ISA FM 2434/6; P. H. Laurence (London) to British Embassy, Washington, 8 Aug. 1955, PRO FO 371-115858; FO official's minute to F. G. K. Gallagher (Damascus) to FO, 4 Sept. 1955, PRO FO 371-115858 VR1073/229; Gallagher to FO, 25 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115859 VR1073/256).

[36] Report on Kinneret raid by Bums, 15 Dec. 1955, PRO FO 371-115836 VR1071/189; M. Gur, 'Pe`ulat Kinneret', *Ma`arachot* 172, (1966); Gut, *Peluga Dalet*, 230-7.

[37] Dayan, *Avnei*, 170; Sharon, *Warrior*, 126; Narkiss, *Hayal*, 165-6. Narkiss states that Ben-Gurion enlarged the operation's scope to 'present Sharett with an [embarrassing] *fait accompli*'. Bar-On, (*Sha`arei `Aza*, 78) maintains that the operation was carried out in

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At the end of November, Sharett had specifically cautioned Ben-Gurion to desist from reprisals while he, Sharett, was in the United States trying to obtain American arms. Reprisals could hamper his efforts. Dulles had promised Israel an answer on its arms requests in early December, and Israeli officials, including Eban, believed the response would be positive.[38] Following the raid, the United States said it was postponing its decision.[39] Sharett, when he heard of *Mivtza `Alei Zayit*, had predicted as much: 'My world became black, the matter of the arms was murdered . . . I was shocked.' The attack had also prevented a possible secret meeting between Nasser and an Israeli representative, and left an impression that Israel was trying to provoke a war.[40]

Sharett's officials spoke out quite emphatically: Eytan, who had had no advance warning of *Mivtza `Alei Zayit*, 'deplored' it as much as his British interlocutors;[41] Ehud Avriel 'was wild with anger. He [said] that this government [headed by Ben-Gurion] was a danger to the nation . . .'[42] According to Tekoah, Dayan simply wanted a pre-emptive war.[43] Eban 'off the record' told US officials that he had greeted news of the operation without enthusiasm,[44] and, 'on the record', sent off a sharp protest to Jerusalem—which drew a detailed response from Ben-Gurion. The prime minister sketched out his philosophy of retaliation: if UN intercession failed to curb Arab violations of the armistice, 'then we ourselves must act'. But Israel could not act as did its neighbours, who sent squads of gunmen across the border to kill indiscriminately. 'We cannot and must not harm civilians across the border. Our attacks must be directed against

(Footnote continued from previous page)

conformity with what had been agreed upon between Ben-Gurion and Dayan on 8 Dec. He brings as proof the fact that Ben-Gurion remained silent when Dayan, at their meeting on 15 Dec., said that the object of the operation had been 'the clearing of the whole coastline, from `Ein Gev to the [Jordan] Estuary'. But Bar-On (ibid. 437 n. 15) also furnishes proof to the contrary, quoting from the protocol of the meeting between the two on 12 Dec., in which Ben-Gurion seems to imply that the operation had been larger than he wanted, and from an entry in the CGS's Logbook, from 13 Dec.: 'Ben-Gurion appears "not so satisfied".'

[38] Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 77-8, 81.

[39] 'Memorandum of Conversation' (George Allen, Donald Bergus, Eban, and Yohanan Meroz), 14 Dec. 1955, NA RG 59, 684A.86/12-1455, Box 2693.

[40] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1307, entry for 11 Dec. 1955 (American time). But it is unclear whether the raid in fact influenced the US decision. Ben-Gurion, Dayan, and the raid's defenders argued that it had not affected the decision. Ben-Gurion felt that Israel had lost nothing by it (protocol of meeting of Mapai Political Committee, 28 Dec. 1955, LPA 26/55). Bar-On (*Sha`arei `Aza*, 81) supports this view. Sharett, who was due to receive the US reply on 12 Dec., believed that Washington had been about to give him a 'limited positive' response but that the raid had thwarted this (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, vi. 1600, entry for 25 July 1956). Available US documentation supports the view that the reply would have been negative even had there been no raid.

[41] J. Nicholls (Tel Aviv) to FO, 13 Dec. 1955, PRO FO 371-115916 VR1092/450.

[42] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1308, entry for 12 Dec. 1955.

[43] Ibid. v. 1313, entry for 23 Dec. 1955.

[44] 'Memorandum of Conversation' (Eban, Yohanan Meroz, Allen, Bergus), 14 Dec. 1955, NA RG 59, 684a.86/12-1455, Box 2593; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1308, entry for 13 Dec. 1955.

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their military or police force[s],' wrote Ben-Gurion. 'There [was] no knowing [in advance] the number of [Arab] casualties' in each raid, argued Ben-Gurion. *Mivtza `Alei Zayit* was justified, as the Syrians had repeatedly fired on Israeli fishing vessels. All that could 'perhaps' be queried was 'the timing', but that had been dictated by the start of the Sea of Galilee fishing season. Public-relations concerns must not deter Israel from launching reprisals: 'If we are deterred by this difficulty—I doubt whether we will be able to maintain the state, settle the South, protect the borders and safeguard the lives of our citizens.'[45]

Within days, Ben-Gurion appears to have developed 'regret[s as to] the timing and scope' of the raid, though he was sure it had not scuttled the US arms deal.[46] Perhaps more than any previous IDF raid, this one drew down upon the army and Ben-Gurion a wide spectrum of internal and public criticism. The Cabinet meeting of 25 December, at which Sharett briefed the ministers on his American trip, was characterized by a great deal of criticism. Pinhas Sapir, the minister of commerce and industry, sensed a general 'sadness' and 'depression' among the ministers.[47] And even the Activist Ahdut Ha`Avodah ministers—Moshe Carmel (transport) and Yisrael Bar-Yehuda (interior)—questioned the raid's timing.[48] A senior retired IDF officer, Shimon Avidan, wrote that the raid 'could only draw Syria and Egypt closer and close off the promised French source of arms'.[49]

Sharett attacked the raid at a meeting of Mapai's Political Committee on 27 December 1955, linking his criticism to the Czech deal. Israel had to obtain corresponding Western arms and support; *Mivtza `Alei Zayit* had undermined this endeavour. The devil himself could not have thought up a better way to harm Israel, he said. Sharett also came down firmly against a pre-emptive war, because the world would 'rise up against us' and because it would solve nothing.[50]

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[45] Ben-Gurion to Eban, 19 Dec. 1955, BGA; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1314, entry for 25 Dec. 1955.

[46] Ibid. v. 1312, 1314, entries for 20 and 25 Dec. 1955.

[47] Ibid. v. 1314, entry for 25 Dec. 1955. Sharett saw it as a personal insult that the raid had taken place while he was in the United States trying to obtain US arms and he had weighed resignation (ibid. v. 1315, Zipora Sharett to Ya`akov and Rina Sharett, 25 Dec. 1955). Sharett's wife, Zipora, believed that Ben-Gurion was the victim of his 'age', his recent illness, a failing of memory, 'his old complex about [Moshe Sharett]', and 'above all' Dayan's 'domination'. Dayan, wrote Zipora, 'wants war'. According to Sharett, Mossad director Isser Harel also believed Dayan had led Ben-Gurion on (ibid. v. 1316, entry for 27 Dec. 1955). According to Sharett, Dayan told the IDF high command that 'this government will not declare war, but we shall get there through incidents' (ibid. v. 1319, entry for 28 Dec. 1955).

[48] Z. Shalom, 'Mediniyut HaBitahon HaShotef, 1948-1956: Dilemot Merkaziyot', in *I'yunim BeTekumat Yisrael*, i (Beersheba, 1991), 162.

[49] 'On the Security Situation', S. Avidan, 14 Dec. 1955, HHA 18.11 (10).

[50] Protocol of Mapai Political Committee meeting, 27 Dec. 1955, LPA 26/55; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1318, entry for 27 Dec. 1955.

The raid was even criticized by Menachem Begin, the head of the Herut Party, which did not usually advocate handling the Arab states with kid gloves. The Syrians would soon return to their devastated positions to snipe again at Israeli boats, he said. And, besides, the raid might have scuttled an arms deal in the West. What had been achieved?[51] Some of the participating troops also apparently criticized the raid.[52]

HaAretz, Israel's leading daily newspaper, charged that the raid had been completely 'disproportionate' to the preceding Syrian provocations. British diplomats, perhaps overly influenced by their Israeli Foreign Ministry contacts, reported that Israeli 'public opinion was shocked by the disproportion between the scale of the attack and the provocation'.[53]

The British and the Americans made strong representations to Jerusalem, calling the raid 'irresponsible' and a 'gratuitous and dangerous' breach of the armistice.[54] Britain suspended a scheduled, relatively large weapons delivery to Israel;[55] the French did likewise.[56]

The raid appears to have had strong repercussions in Damascus: 'Public emotions have been deeply stirred,' reported an American diplomat. Young Syrian officers pressed for immediate retaliation against Israel. The 'extremists' in the Syrian army, according to American diplomats, would seek 'closer ties with Soviets' (if the Security Council failed to impose sanctions against Israel).[57] Elsewhere in the Arab world, the raid prompted all the usual expressions of solidarity, but had no real effect. Nasser informed Hammarskjold that Egypt, in line with its treaty commitments, regarded the raid as tantamount to an act of aggression against itself and would 'not hesitate to use its land, sea and air forces' to defend itself.[58] But it did nothing. In the longer term, the raid may have put the fear of God (meaning, of the IDF) into the Syrian high command, thus, perhaps, contributing to Syria's non-intervention in the 1956 Sinai-Suez War.[59]

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[51] Shalom, 'Mediniyut', 161-2.

[52] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1327, Zipora Sharett to Ya`akov and Rina Sharett, 5 Jan. 1956.

[53] British Embassy, Tel Aviv, to Selwyn Lloyd, 20 Feb. 1956, PRO FO 371-121692 R1011/1.

[54] Nicholls to FO, 13 Dec. 1955, PRO FO 371-115916 VR1092/450.

[55] Cabinet meeting minute, 3 Jan. 1956, PRO CAB 128-30.

[56] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1332-3, entry for 15 Jan. 1956.

[57] Sir J. Gardner (Damascus) to FO, 14 Dec. 1955, PRO FO 371-115916 VR1092/455; J. S. Moose jun. (Damascus) to SecState, 15 Dec. 1955, NA RG 59, 684a.86/12-1555, Box 2693; Moose to SecState, 23 Dec. 1955, NA RG 59, 684a.86/12-2355, Box 2693.

[58] H. Trevelyan (Cairo) to FO, 17 Dec. 1955, PRO FO 371-115911 VR1092/464.

[59] Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 85.

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Fedayeen Operations and Retaliatory Strikes, Late 1955-1956

The Gaza Border Crisis of April 1956

The raids on Kuntilla and the Sabha in October-November 1955, with their large Egyptian losses and their blows to Egyptian self-confidence, sobered Cairo. The Egyptians understood that further provocation of Israel along the border would have to wait until the Egyptian army had absorbed its new Soviet weapons and was stronger. Cairo probably sensed that Israel wanted to goad Egypt into a war in which the Eyptian army could be destroyed.

Nasser, insisting he was still interested in peace with Israel, gave 'strict orders' to desist from retaliation, according to Burns, who met him in Cairo on 12 November. Burns interpreted the assurance to mean that Egypt would desist from Fedayeen raids from Egypt itself. But, as we have seen, Egypt began to launch raids on Israel from other Arab states. In November there were sabotage attacks in Kibbutz `Ein Harod, Moshav `Ein Hemed, Rosh Ha`Ayin, and Moshav Safiah, all in areas that had been quiet for months. Both Jordanian intelligence and General Burns believed the saboteurs were Palestinians recruited and financed by Egyptian officials in Amman (and, perhaps, trained in Gaza).[60]

Britain again complained to Amman of the activities of the Egyptian military attaché and his agents. Jordan arrested seven persons linked to terrorism in the Nablus area and promised to watch the attaché. But Jordanian intelligence was unable to identify Palestinians recruited by the Egyptians or those who had carried out the raids.[61]

Egypt had completely halted infiltrator raids across its borders, but during December 1955 and the first three months of 1956 Egyptian troops regularly sniped at Israeli patrols along the Gaza border. Egypt maintained that the sniping was triggered by the troops' fear of attack by IDF patrols who moved flush against the demarcation line. Israel believed that the sniping was Egyptian policy. From 1 March to 4 April 1956 Israel submitted fifty-three complaints of Egyptian firing across the line, and thirty-nine complaints of alleged crossings of the line by shepherds and

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[60] 'Instructions for Chef de Bataillon Giacomaggi', unsigned and undated (but from Burns in Nov. 1955), UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-96, EIMAC 1955/1956, SG Proposals.

[61] Burns to UN secretary-general, 15 Nov. 1955, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-96; Tekoah to Israel Embassy?, undated (but from Nov. 1955), ISA FM 2454/8; QIADA to T.J.L., 7 Nov. 1955, PRO FO 371-115909; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1289, entry for 6 Nov. 1955; untitled memo. by P. H. Laurence, 22 Nov. 1955, PRO FO 371-115909 VR1092/427. Glubb authorized the publication of a statement alleging that Israel itself was responsible for the Nov. raids (British Embassy, Amman, to Levant Department, FO, 1 Dec. 1955, PRO FO 371-115916 VR1092/ 439).

farmers, to the EIMAC. During the same period, Egypt complained of twenty-eight incidents of Israelis firing across the line. The United Nations tried but failed to achieve a lasting cease-fire.[62]

The Shelling of Gaza

For months, no Israelis were killed. But a fatality, and a blow-up, were only a matter of time. On 2 April 1956 an IDF patrol which was trying to drive off a flock of sheep that had crossed into Israel was ambushed by an Egyptian unit that had dug in on the Israeli side of the line. One Israeli soldier was killed and another wounded. Dayan and Ben-Gurion issued orders that IDF units could freely return Egyptian fire, using artillery if necessary.[63] On 4 April the Egyptians' 'murderous and monstrously provocative behaviour'—Sharett's phrase[64] resulted in serious Israeli casualties. A fourteen-man patrol moving south along the line opposite Nuseirat was fired at from three Egyptian positions (and perhaps also an Egyptian ambush inside Israeli territory). Three Israelis died. IDF reinforcements opened up with mortars, killing an Egyptian soldier. Later, an IDF 25-pounder artillery battery fired forty shells at Deir al Balah, causing damage but no casualties.[65]

The following day, 5 April, Dayan was ready. It is unclear who fired the first shot. IDF gunners began shelling Egyptian army positions, Hill 69 and Hill 86 (near Deir al Balah), at around 11 a.m., an hour or so after initial small-arms fire exchanges. Between 1.00 p.m. and 6.30 p.m. Israeli artillery intermittently shelled `Abasan, Bani Suheila, and Izha'a Hill. The Egyptians alleged that four persons were killed and nine wounded. At about 3.00 p.m., according to UNTSO, the Egyptians began pounding the kibbutzim Kfar `Aza, Nahal-Oz, Kissufim, and 'Ein HaShlosha with 120-mm mortars, firing some forty bombs. The kibbutz members took refuge in their bomb shelters. Two persons were injured in Nahal-Oz and buildings were damaged in Kissufim and `Ein HaShlosha.[66]

The Israeli response was swift and massive. Perhaps Dayan sought to provoke war. At 4.15 p.m. Israeli gunners opened up with 120-mm mortars on Gaza city. The shelling, according to UN observers, 'was centred on the main street of the town'. None of the shells fell closer than one

[62] Burns to UN secretary-general, 12 Dec. 1955, UNA DAG-13/3.4.0-96, EIMAC 1955/1956, SG Proposals; 'Report to the Secretary-General on the Gaza Incident of 5 Apr. 1956', UNTSO, 15 May 1956, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-49; Eytan to Israel missions (London, etc.), dated '9' Apr. 1956 (*recte* 7 Apr. 1956), ISA FM 2952/2; Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 87.

[63] Ibid. 87; Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 144.

[64] Sharett to Burns, 5 Apr. 1956, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-49.

[65] 'Report to the Secretary-General on the Gaza Incident of 5 Apr. 1956', UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-49; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1388, entry for 4 Apr. 1956.

[66] Area Commander Logbook, entry for 5 Apr. 1956, Nahal-Oz Archive.

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kilometre to a military position, though Israel alleged that Egypt maintained 'fortified emplacements' within the city and that these had been the target. UNTSO said that there were no 'fortified emplacements' within the city—unless one counted the Gaza police station. The shelling of Gaza on 5 April killed fifty-eight Egyptian and Palestinian civilians (33 men, 15 women, 10 children) and wounded 100 (54 men, 33 women, 13 children), also killing four Egyptian soldiers and wounding seven others. Israeli losses that day were four civilians and two soldiers wounded.[67]

Israel Foreign Ministry director general Eytan cabled his ambassadors that Israel had had no choice, after the Egyptian shelling of the border settlements, 'but to shell their towns to end the wild attack'.[68] But two months later Sharett termed the shelling of Gaza 'a crime'. On the afternoon of 5 April, informed (probably by Burns) of what was happening, Sharett called Ben-Gurion, who, according to Sharett, immediately ordered the shelling of the city stopped. It is not clear whether Dayan had Ben-Gurion's prior approval for the shelling of Gaza city.[69]

Nasser Responds: The Fedayeen Strike Again

At Burns's request, Ben-Gurion agreed to keep IDF patrols half a kilometre from the border—over Dayan's objections. The directive 'temporarily' to halt the 'offending' patrols apparently went out on 6 April.[70] But Egypt had to react to the shelling of Gaza. Israeli intelligence learnt that Cairo had ordered the activation of Fedayeen squads against Israel from neighbouring countries. Burns, asked by Israel to warn the 'relevant governments' and well aware of the combustibility of the situation, duly passed the warning to Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, and directed a 'special

[67] 'Report to the Secretary-General on the Gaza Incident of 5 Apr. 1956', UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-49. Dayan, (*Avnei*, 185) maintained that the IDF had responded to the Egyptian shelling of the Israeli settlements by firing some fifty 120-mm rounds 'on the central Egyptian position in the city of Gaza—[*sic*] Jabel Muntar'. This is a half-truth. The 'Ali Muntar Hill, on which there was a large Egyptian position, is about one kilometre south-east of Gaza city. The IDF indeed shelled the hill that afternoon—but it also shelled the city centre. The IDF's 120-mm mortars were (and remain) one of the most accurate pre-laser-guided weapons, and, at a range of 6-7 kilometres, the range that afternoon, normally score hits within 0-30 metres of target. Israeli mortar fire that afternoon was directed at the centre of Gaza city to cause the maximum civilian casualties. Bar-On, Dayan's *chef de bureau* in spring 1956, in *Etgar VeTigra*, 88 (and in *Sha`arei `Aza*, 144), states explicitly that 'at 16.00 hours the General Staff order[ed] to direct the fire at the centre of Gaza city'.

[68] Eytan to Israel missions (London, etc.), '9' Apr. 1956 (*recte* 7 Apr. 1956), ISA FM 2952/2.

[69] Dayan, *Avnei*, 185; Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 144; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1517, 28 June 1956, address before young Mapai leadership. On a visit to the area after the shelling, Dayan apparently ordered his commanders to 'take care [in future] not to hit civilians' (Dayan, *Avnei*, 186).

[70] Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 145; Dayan, *Avnei*, 186, 188.

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warning' to Egypt. But Cairo declined to give him an 'assurance' that it would not activate 'terrorist' infiltrators.[71]

Contrary to Israeli intelligence expectations, Nasser decided this time to attack Israel directly, from the Strip, with the Fedayeen. The Fedayeen, he believed, were the only effective tool available; shelling was ineffective, as Israel had no large civilian target within range. The Fedayeen, said Nasser, were instructed 'to ensure sixty [Israeli] dead and 100 wounded' (similar to Egypt's casualties in the shelling of Gaza). Ben-Gurion, said Nasser, was 'responsive to no other type of persuasion'; henceforth, he would adopt a policy of an 'eye for an eye'. But Nasser insisted that he did not want war. When US Ambassador Byroade suggested that, 'if [the] Israelis wanted war, he [Nasser] was walking straight into their trap', Nasser retorted that he could not 'sit idly by' as Gaza's civilians were slaughtered: 'Ben-Gurion must learn that lives of Arabs could not be considered as second class.'[72]

Even before the shelling of Gaza, in March 1956 Egyptian scouts had undertaken a series of intelligence-gathering sorties into southern Israel, collecting information on Israeli traffic, patrols, and military installations.[73] On the afternoon of 6 April, according to Abdullah Muhammed Ahmed Saleh, a Feda'i captured during the operation, some 200 Fedayeen were trucked to the Gaza Strip-Israel border at Beit Hanun from their camp west of Gaza city[74] and briefed by Captain Mustafa Gemosh (or Gemash) of the Egyptian army. They were then divided into squads of 4-7 men and armed with Karl Gustav sub-machine-guns, explosives, mines, and grenades. Some of the Fedayeen, almost all Palestinian refugees, were natives of villages in the nothern Negev approaches, the area to which they were now being sent. Some squads went east towards Brur Hayil-Kiryat Gat and some north, in the direction of Ashkelon-Ashdod. Others penetrated as far west as Beersheba and as far south as Kibbutz Gevulot. They were not too well trained, but they knew the terrain. Their orders varied, though most seem to have been rather loosely instructed to blow up, shoot, or destroy whatever targets they encountered in Israel, with a particular stress on ambushing vehicles. The raiders do not seem to have been instructed to distinguish between

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[71] Tekoah to Israel missions (London, etc.), 6 Apr. 1956, ISA FM 2952/2; Tekoah to Israel missions (New York, etc.), 6 Apr. 1956, ISA FM 2952/2; Tekoah to Burns, 6 Apr. 1956, ISA FM 2440/7; Eytan to Israel missions (London, etc.), '9' Apr. 1956 (*recte* 7 Apr. 1956), ISA FM 2952/2; Burns to Ben-Gurion, 8 Apr. 1956, ISA FM 2440/7.

[72] H. Byroade to SecState, 9 Apr. 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/4-956, Box 2694.

[73] Maj. P. Swarte (Swedish army) and Capt. L. Barden (Canadian army), UNTSO, to chairman of EIMAC, 19 Apr. 1956, ISA FM 2437/6; Maj. J. Le Grelle (Belgian army), UNTSO, to chairman of EIMAC, 12 Mar. 1956, ISA FM 2439/6.

[74] Maj. B. R. Hansen (Danish army), UNTSO, to chairman EIMAC, 18 Apr. 1956, ISA FM 2437/6. Dayan (*Avnei*, 187) puts the number of Fedayeen sent into Israel in the April campaign at 'between 100 and 200'.

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military and civilian targets. One captured Feda`i's squad was specifically told to 'throw explosives [and] fire at any vehicles'. Other groups were ordered to 'blow up, kill and destroy as much as possible', 'blow up railway bridges' and tracks, and 'mine roads'. The raiders were ordered to return to Gaza but, if that proved impossible, to go to Jordan.[75]

The Fedayeen campaign began on 7 April and ended on 11-12 April, the raiders losing 16 dead, 2 missing, and 5 captured, and killing 8 or 9 Israeli civilians and 2 soldiers and wounding 32 civilians and 17 military personnel. Fifty-nine Fedayeen, their missions completed, escaped to Jordan, handing their arms to the Egyptian Legation in Amman.[76] Dayan attributed Israel's relatively small casualties and the Fedayeen's lack of success to the advance warning and the subsequent massive IDF deployment in the south, which had included about 1,000 ambushes, and patrols and curfews.[77]

The attacks began with ambushes on roads near the border and west of Faluja-'Uza. A railway line and a water-pumping station were also hit. In all, four Israelis were killed and ten wounded on 7 April.[78] Next day, grenade attacks on civilian homes in Ashkelon, Gal'on, and Shafir (Shafrir), left a number of Israelis wounded; attacks destroyed a water-pumping station, railway lines, and a bridge in the Nitzanim area.[79] On 9 and 10 April Fedayeen mines blew up IDF patrol vehicles, and ambushes left about a dozen soldiers and civilians wounded, the raiders penetrating as far north as the outskirts of Rehovot and as far east as Beit Govrin. Two Mekorot water-company workers were killed and three wounded in a grenade and light-weapons attack at Ketzi`ot. The campaign reached a climax on 11 April, when Fedayeen operating south-east of Tel Aviv, some thirty-five kilometres from the Gaza Strip, fired on a bus and a truck before murdering four (some sources say five) children and teachers and wounding another five in an attack on a synagogue in a boarding school at Moshav Shafir.[80] This outrage brought Sharett a personal note from

[75] Swarte and Barden to chairman of EIMAC, 19 Apr. 1956, ISA FM 2437/6; FM to Israel missions (London, etc.), 9 Apr. 1956, ISA FM 2952/2; 'Letter Dated 10 Apr. 1956 from the Permanent Representative of Israel [Arthur C. Liveran] Addressed to the President of the Security Council', 10 Apr. 1956, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-49.

[76] 'Casualties of the Parties under GAA [General Armistice Agreement] in Palestine (1 Jan.-30 Sept. '56)', UNTSO, Jerusalem, 10 Oct. 1956, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-53; Ya`ari, *Mitzrayim*, 24; and Wallach and Lissak (eds.), *Atlas*, 121. Ya`ari says that of the twenty-three Fedayeen killed, missing, or captured, eleven were Gaza locals, eleven refugees, and one was a bedouin. All but two were married. Fourteen had children. Most were 25 years old and over.

[77] Dayan, *Avnei*, 187; Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 145.

[78] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1390, entry for 7 Apr. 1956; 'Fedayeen Activity Prior [to] the Sinai Campaign', memo.-chronology prepared either by UNTSO or Israeli delegates to EIMAC, undated, ISA FM 2952/2.

[79] Lt.-Col. Y. Nursella, EIMAC, to Tekoah, FM undated but from mid-Apr. 1956, ISA FM 2439/7; 'Fedayeen Activity Prior [to] the Sinai Campaign', ISA FM 2952/2.

[80] Dayan, *Diary of the Sinai Campaign*, 7-8; 'Fedayeen Activity Prior [to] the Sinai Campaign', ISA FM 2952/2.

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the British ambassador, condemning this 'more than usually deplorable . . . brutal murder'.[81] Elsewhere that night Fedayeen wounded another dozen or so Israelis in ambushes and grenade attacks. The following morning, 12 April, four Eygptian jets penetrated Israeli airspace over the Negev, one being shot down by IAF interceptors.[82]

On 10 April the official Cairo Radio declared:

> The Fedayeen actions . . . have put an end to the tranquillity that Israel enjoyed. . . The Fedayeen . . . reached Majdal . . . . In the wake of these incidents the whole of the Negev is in a state of tension, readiness and panic . . . [The Israeli settlements are filled with] dread, panic and fear.[83]

The campaign shook Israel. Would the Negev settlements hold up under the strain? 'Are we on the verge of war? ', Sharett asked on 8 April,[84] and, following Shafir, noted an 'eve-of-war' atmosphere.[85] On 9 April Dayan had proposed a large-scale strike deep in Sinai, with amphibious or paratroop landings; alternatively, if war was ruled out, a small-scale raid on a Fedayeen camp and other targets in the Strip, followed by IDF conquest of Rafah if Egypt retaliated with air attacks. But Ben-Gurion ruled against retaliation in the light of the relatively low number of Israeli casualties and of American pressure to give UN Secretary-General Hammarskjold's peace-making shuttle a chance.[86]

But the massacre at Shafir changed matters. Ben-Gurion ordered Dayan to prepare the army for war, and called an emergency Cabinet session for 13 April. The paratroops were put on alert; several reserve brigades were mobilized. The Golani Brigade was deployed opposite Rafah. On 12 April Ben-Gurion met with Dayan, the DMI, and the IAF commander. War plans were discussed.[87] In Cabinet the next day, Ben-Gurion called for a reprisal against a Fedayeen camp in Gaza. Clearly, in the circumstances, this could have meant war; escalation was almost inevitable. Several ministers, led by Sharett, opposed the motion or expressed reservations. Moshe Shapira, the minister for religious affairs, said there should be no reprisal before Ben-Gurion met Hammarskjold.

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[81] Nicholls to Sharett, 12 Apr. 1956, ISA FM 2439/7.

[82] Tekoah to Col. R. E. Hommel, assistant chief of staff, UNTSO, 12 Apr. 1956, ISA FM 2439/7.

[83] FM to Israel missions (Paris, Rome, etc.), 10 Apr. 1956, ISA FM 2439/7; 'The Egyptian Propaganda Relating to the Fedayeen Activity in Israel', unsigned (but probably by Israel Foreign Ministry Research Dept.), undated (but from Apr. 1956), ISA FM 2440/7.

[84] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1390, entry for 8 Apr. 1956.

[85] Ibid. v. 1390, entry for 12 Apr. 1956.

[86] Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 91; Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 146. There is a contradiction between Bar-On's two versions. In *Etgar VeTigra* he says that on 9 Apr. Dayan pressed for a massive retaliatory strike, perhaps to precipitate war. But in *Sha`arei `Aza* Dayan appears to have agreed with Ben-Gurion's decision for restraint.

[87] Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 92, Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 147-8.

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Reluctantly, the ministers finally empowered Ben-Gurion to launch a retaliatory strike as he saw fit if the Fedayeen raids resumed. Sharett, the only minister who voted against, emerged depressed, anticipating war.[88]

As it turned out, Sharett once again had won. Western and UN pressures on Nasser and Egypt's fears of war before its army was ready persuaded Cairo to halt the raids. Ben-Gurion and Dayan once again were denied their war.

Hammarskjold Intervenes

The United Nations' contribution to preventing war in April 1956 was crucial. Burns's calls for a cease-fire on 5 April were followed up by the announcement that Hammarskjold himself was coming to try to reestablish the cease-fire, his planned visit being brought forward because of the hostilities. Hammarskjold cabled Ben-Gurion on 9 April, asking for restraint. Eisenhower cabled in support of Hammarskjold.[89] Hammarskjold flew to the Middle East, met Nasser on 11 April, and obtained an assurance of a cease-fire and an undertaking that Egypt would abide by the armistice agreement. Israel saw the massacre at Shafir a few hours later as an outrageous violation of this undertaking, and, believing a new wave of Fedayeen raids had been unleashed, felt cheated by Nasser and/or Hammarskjold. Hammarskjold informed Ben-Gurion from Cairo of Nasser's undertaking, and asked that Israel provide a similar commitment. But his message was treated in Jerusalem with a certain scepticism. Ben-Gurion and Hammarskjold exchanged sharp letters about the sought-after Israeli commitment and Egypt's adherence or non-adherence to the armistice accords. But on 16 April the Israeli government formally agreed to Hammarskjold's demand and unconditionally accepted the re-establishment of the cease-fire. Next day Ben-Gurion wrote to Hammarskjold accepting the cease-fire as of 18.00 hours on 18 April. On 19 April IDF Operations Branch ordered all units to cease patrolling fight up to the line and to avoid firing across it except in exceptional circumstances. Israel began preparing a new patrol road 500 metres inland.[90] So ended the April 1956 Fedayeen campaign.

A curious relationship, mixing mutual distrust and respect, developed between Hammarskjold and Ben-Gurion during the crisis.[91] The two

[88] Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 91-2; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1392-3, entry for 13 Apr. 1956. Bar-On, *Shal`arei `Aza*, 146, implies that Ben-Gurion, at the 13 Apr. Cabinet meeting, did not support a retaliatory strike or war.

[89] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1391-1412, entries for 9, 10, and 13 Apr. 1956.

[90] Tekoah to Hommel, 12 Apr. 1956, ISA FM 2439/7; Dayan, *Avnei*, 188; Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 89, 93; Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 153-4.

[91] Hammarskjold thought that Ben-Gurion suffered from 'a deeply ingrained persecution complex which may be only too natural in the light of his whole family history' (Hammarskjold

(Footnote continued on next page)

corresponded about Israeli-Arab relations and the rights and wrongs of the armistice violations until the end of September, when Hammarskjold broke off the exchange as pointless. In that final letter, the UN head wrote:

> The situation is quite clear. You are convinced that a threat of retaliation has a deterrent effect. I am convinced that it is more of an incitement to individual members of the Arab forces than even what has been said by their own governments. You are convinced that acts of retaliation will stop further incidents. I am convinced that they will lead to further incidents . . . . You believe that this way of creating respect for Israel will pave the way for sound coexistence with the Arab people. I believe that the policy may postpone indefinitely the time for such coexistence.[92]

The April Fedayeen campaign was to have two postscripts, one tragic, the other fitting.

Ro`i Rothberg

Just after dawn on 29 April 1956 Ro`i Rothberg, Kibbutz Nahal-Oz's security officer (*ma"az*), was shot off his horse by Palestian infiltrators in the settlement's fields. He was shot again as he lay on the ground and then clubbed repeatedly with rifle butts before being dragged across the line into Egypt.

It was a well-laid trap rather than a spontaneous incident. A group of infiltrating sorghum-reapers had faded into a nearby wood as Rothberg approached. As he rode into the field, the armed attackers had sprung from concealment. Rothberg's body was returned to Israel that afternoon after EIMAC mediation; his face had been smashed almost beyond recognition and his eyes had been put out.[93]

The murder capped a local chapter of marauding. Nahal-Oz, originally a Na"hal outpost, was founded in 1953, about one kilometre from the

(Footnote continued from previous page)

to Selwyn Lloyd, 1 Aug. 1956, PRO FO 371-121744). Ben-Gurion at first (Jan. 1956) thought Hammarskjold 'pleasant, courteous, interesting, and frank'. But during their prolonged April encounter, Ben-Gurion, while conceding Hammarskjold's 'great sharpness and wit', came away with 'great doubts about his intellectual integrity and fairness' (Ben-Gurion to Eban, 27 May 1956, BGA). In the course of one of their encounters, Ben-Gurion apparently accused Hammarskjold of 'unconscious anti-Semitism' ('Record of Conversation with the Secretary-General of the United Nations on Palestine', P.M. Crostwaithe, 1 Aug. 1956, PRO FO 371-121744). Sharett merely thought that Hammarskjold was a 'hypocrite' (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1589, entry for 25 July 1956).

[92] Hammarskjold to Ben-Gurion, 26 Sept. 1956, ISA FM 2448/5 bet. Hammarskjold, perhaps, was being diplomatic in not referring to the possibility that Israel's reprisals at this time were, in part at least, launched with a view to precipitating war. See also Burns (*Arab and Israeli*, 136-47) for a summary of the April crisis and the Hammarskjold mission.

[93] Senior Israel Delegate to chairman EIMAC, 29 Apr. 1956, ISA FM 2437/2; Lt.-Col. Nursella to Tekoah, 3 May 1956, ISA FM 2436/8; *BaMahane*, 2 May 1956; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1399, entry for 29 Apr. 1956; Ben-Gurion to Hammarskjold, 1 May 1956, BGA.

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demarcation line. Within weeks, a Na"hal soldier, Ya`akov ('Tommy') Grobler, had been shot dead by Egyptian soldiers.[94] Problems with infiltrators bent on cultivating and reaping the kibbutz fields began almost immediately, and intensified during 1954. One can follow the unfolding stuggle in the Nahal-Oz security officer's logbook:

> 12 December 1953: At 07.00 hours the machine-gunner in the forward position noticed an Arab and his camel who had crossed the border in the wood. He fired a number of bursts, hitting the camel, which fell on the other side of the line.
>
> 27 April 1954: The combine [driver] discovered that the field on the 'Bakiya Hill' cannot be reaped as most of the wheat has already been taken [by infiltrators].
>
> 29 April 1954: Next to the second ruin, a squad of Na"hal scouts shot dead [*hishkiva*] two Arabs. They left two sacks. A squad was sent to the area covertly to watch over the corpses. No results [i.e. a follow-up squad was sent in to ambush any infiltrators coming to retrieve the corpses].
>
> 10 May 1954: The irrigators in the field found that eight pipes were missing. [They were] stolen . . . Tracks led toward the border.
>
> 6 June 1954: A two-man patrol encountered a group of reapers. The patrol opened fire and started chasing after them. [They] left behind one dead; a second person was wounded but not found.
>
> 23 August 1954: Within the framework of actions to prevent the reaping of the sorghum [by infiltrators], 150 rounds of 7.92-mm ammunition were fired, thirty-five 9-mm rounds, one grenade.
>
> 15 December 1954: A two-man patrol sighted two infiltrators in the vegetable garden. Fire was opened and the two men fled, leaving a trail of blood and a broken irrigation tap [*schtutzer*].
>
> 16 December 1954: The *schtutzerim* were booby-trapped [by us] with grenades in two places . . . . The booby-traps are under observation.
>
> 2 July 1955: Medium machine-gun fire from [Egyptian] Position 63. Several bursts were fired towards the kibbutz, and hits were recorded next to the Na"hal huts and the kibbutz offices. A burst of air-explosive shells from a 20-mm anti-aircraft gun was also fired in the direction of the kibbutz, exploding high over the settlement's buildings.
>
> 26 August 1955: A tractor driver again found an anti-vehicle mine . . . Work in the area was halted.
>
> 19 March 1956: Signs of reaping found near the 'Bakiya Hill' and in Wadi Dror. A day ambush commanded by Hovav [apparently, a Nahal-Oz member] encountered a group of stinking Arab women [`*arviyot matzhinot*] who were reaping twenty metres away from him . . . . They [i.e. Hovav's men] contented themselves with several bursts in the air. We assume that the Arab women are still running.

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[94] Lt. M. Monheit, Gush Magen intelligence officer, to security officer, Nahal-Oz, 23 Dec. 1953, Nahal-Oz Archive.

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> 27 March 1956: Moshke and Yehiel encountered two wretched Arabs [`*aravim miskenim*] reaping, on a rainy and cold day, under the 'Bakiya Hill'. They [i.e. the kibbutz members] opened fire . . . They believe that one [of the Arabs] was injured . . . .
>
> 31 March 1956: An . . . ambush . . . encountered a group of fifty Arab reapers . . . [but] they managed to complete their work and to withdraw to the other side [of the line], but they did this under Uzi [sub-machine-gun] and rifle fire, leaving mules and a large number of sacks [with wheat] . . . . One or two Arabs were hit. The ambushers retreated under Egyptian machine-gun fire.[95]

Rothberg, who frequently rode along the border chasing off infiltrators, was well known to the infiltrators and to Egyptian intelligence. A day or so before his murder, he 'caught four infiltrators in our fields, beat them up and drove them across the . . . [border]'.[96] Two days later he was dead. Some of those he had beaten may have been among his murderers.

Rothberg's killers were caught by Israeli security men a few days after the IDF conquest of the Gaza Strip in November 1956.[97] Two of them, an Egyptian police sergeant, Jamil `Abd al Kassim al-Wadia, and a Palestinian *fellah*, Mahmud Muhammad Yusuf Abu Ziara, were tried in February 1957 in the Jerusalem District Court and sentenced to life imprisonment. They confessed that the murder had been planned a day or two before at a local police station. (Egyptian military intelligence, they said, had had no hand in the affair.) The planning session had followed complaints by Egyptian infiltrators that Rothberg had interfered with their reaping and, on one occasion, had stolen several of their mules. The murder had been carried out by five armed Arabs, principally al-Wadia, and a group of 'reapers' who had served as bait. Rothberg had managed to let off a few shots before being cut down. He was almost certainly dead before being dragged across the line to Gaza.[98] Al-Wadia and Abu Ziara were returned to Egypt in the 1960s in a prisoner exchange.

Rothberg was buried at Nahal-Oz on 30 April. Dayan, who had met Rothberg a few days before on a visit to the kibbutz, and had been much taken with the young security officer and his beautiful wife, Amira, spoke at the graveside in terms that provide insights into his own character and the nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the 1950s:

> Yesterday at dawn, Ro`i was murdered. The quiet of the spring morning blinded him, and he did not see those who sought his life hiding behind the furrow.
>
> Let us not, today, cast blame on the murderers. What can we say against their

---

[95] Nahal-Oz Area Commander Logbook, Nahal-Oz Archive.

[96] Area Commander Logbook, entry for 27—8 Apr. 1956, Nahal-Oz Archive.

[97] IDF intelligence officer Raft Siton claimed to have identified one of the killers in a chance encounter in Gaza police station (Siton and Shoshan, *Anshei*, 220-1).

[98] Articles, in Nahal-Oz Archive, from `*Al HaMishmar*, 9 Dec. 1956; *LaMerhav*, 23 Dec. 1953; *Davar*, 3 Jan. 1957; *HaBoker*, 4 Feb. 1957.

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terrible hatred of us? For eight years now, they have sat in the refugee camps of Gaza, and have watched how, before their very eyes, we have turned their lands and villages, where they and their forefathers previously dwelled, into our home.

It is not among the Arabs of Gaza, but in our own midst that we must seek Ro`i's blood. How did we shut our eyes and refuse to look squarely at our fate and to see, in all its brutality, the destiny of our generation? Can we forget that this group of youngsters, sitting in Nahal-Oz, carries on its shoulders the heavy gates of Gaza?

Beyond the furrow of the border surges a sea of hatred and revenge; revenge that looks towards the day when the calm will blunt our alertness, the day when we shall listen to the ambassadors of malign hypocrisy who call upon us to lay down our arms.[99]

To us and us alone cries out Ro`i's blood, from his mangled body. Because we swore a thousand times that our blood will not be spilled lightly—and yet again yesterday we were tempted, we listened, and we believed.

Let us take stock today with ourselves. We are a generation of settlement [*dor hitnahalut*] and without the steel helmet and the gun's muzzle we will not be able to plant a tree and build a house. Let us not fear to look squarely at the hatred that consumes and fills the lives of hundreds [of thousands] of Arabs who live around us. Let us not drop our gaze, lest our arms be weakened. That is the fate of our generation [*gzeirat doreinu*]. This is our choice—to be ready and armed, tough and harsh—or else the sword shall fall from our hands and our lives will be cut short.

Young Ro`i, who went forth from Tel Aviv to build his home at the gates of Gaza to be a bulwark for his people—the light in his heart blinded his sight and he failed to see the sword's flash. The longing for peace deafened his ears and he failed to hear the voice of the murderer waiting in ambush. The gates of Gaza proved too heavy for his shoulders, and overcame him.[100]

The Deaths of Hafez and Mustafa

But perhaps the real epilogue to the April Fedayeen campaign was the assassination, by IDF intelligence, of Colonel Hafez, the overall controller of Fedayeen activities against Israel, and of his representative in Amman, Lieutenant-Colonel Mustafa, the Egyptian military attaché and director of Fedayeen operations in Jordan.

Hafez's assassination was an accomplished piece of tradecraft. On 11 July 1956 Hafez was sitting in the garden of his Gaza headquarters when an agent arrived from Israel. Muhammad Suleiman al Talalka, a Gaza resident, asked to meet his controller, Captain Yusuf Azeb. But Azeb was

[99] The reference here was to Hammarskjold and other 'well-intentioned' Western leaders who were prodding Israel to make concessions. Dayan's eulogy was broadcast the same day on Israel Radio. Ben-Gurion objected to the reference to 'ambassadors of malign hypocrisy', and, when the eulogy was rebroadcast, the passage was omitted.

[100] The speech is to be found, with slight differences and abridgements, in *BaMahane*, 2 May 1956.

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out, so Hafez and his assistant, Major Imru al Haridi, went in to see the man. A1 Talalka had been in Israel six times during the previous two months on intelligence-gathering missions for Hafez. Using Israeli bedouin relatives as intermediaries, al Talalka—in co-ordination with his Egyptian controllers—had volunteered his services to Israeli intelligence. He had become a double agent. IDF intelligence quickly saw through him (after bugging a conversation he had with one of his relatives, who also worked for the Egyptians). But al Talalka was unaware of this.

Before setting out from Israel that morning, his Israeli 'controllers' had entrusted him with an 'important mission'. He was to carry an encoded message, hidden in a book, to an Egyptian police inspector in Gaza, Lutfi al Akawi. A1 Talalka naturally assumed that al Akawi was an Israeli agent. A1 Talalka was driven to the border with the 'book', wrapped in paper, hidden in his undergarments. As expected by Israeli intelligence, he headed straight for Hafez's headquarters. He told Hafez and al Haridi what had happened and asked to be allowed to deliver the 'book' to al Akawi; al Talalka was keen on getting the bonus promised by his Israeli controllers. But Hafez's curiosity got the better of him. He took the 'book' and pulled off the wrapping paper. A slip of paper fell to the floor and Hafez bent down to pick it up. The 400-gram book-bomb then exploded, severely injuring Hafez, al Haridi, and al Talalka. Hafez died a few hours later; al Talalka was blinded for life. AI Akawi was subsequently arrested, but an Egyptian investigation cleared him. A1 Talalka, while found wanting in intelligence, was also cleared.[101]

The attaché in Amman, Lieutenant-Colonel Mustafa, was even more careless. He had certainly heard of Hafez's death three days before (though perhaps he did not know the exact circumstances). Yet on 14 July Mustafa's driver collected from the Amman central post office a package sent from East Jerusalem, ostensibly by UNTSO headquarters. The driver brought the package—which contained a biography of the Second World War German tank general, Gerd von Runstedt—back to the car and handed it to Mustafa. The parcel exploded in Mustafa's face and he died a few hours later.

The assassinations had been master-minded by Harkabi, who a few months before had publicly named Hafez and Mustafa as the organizers

[101] This description of Hafez's demise relies heavily on Ya`ari, *Mitzrayim*, 27-31. See also *BaMahane*, 4 Nov. 1987. Ya`ari used the Egyptian investigation report to reconstruct the episode. The Egyptian press, incidentally, reported Hafez's death on 13 July 1956, stating that he had died when his car hit a mine. Israeli newspapers reported that Hafez had been murdered by Palestinian refugees avenging the death of Fedayeen whom he had sent into Israel. Ben-Gurion not quite truthfully noted in his diary on 13 July 1956 (BGA): 'Hafez. . . died in an explosion. He used to send saboteurs and spies to the country [i.e. Israel]—and one of these put an end to his life.'

of the Fedayeen, and by Haim Levakov, a veteran intelligence officer.[102] Curiously, Nasser kicked off his historic speech in Alexandria on 26 July, announcing Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal, with a tribute to his two fallen intelligence officers.[103]

The Jordan Border, November 1954-October 1956

Border Incidents, late 1954-early 1955

Despite the stepped-up Arab Legion patrolling along the West Bank's borders after `Azzun and Beit Liqya, and the steady overall decrease in infiltration, incidents continued. Occasionally, they stemmed from the Legion's efforts to curb infiltration. For example, on 28 November 1954 a Legion patrol spotted an infiltrator near Battir, in the Judaean Hills, and, chasing after him, crossed into Israeli territory (inadvertently, maintained the Jordanians). An IDF unit opened up on the patrol after it had apprehended the man, and four Legionnaires were killed and two others (and the infiltrator) were wounded. The Jordanians temporarily walked out of the MAC. The Foreign Office put pressure on Jordan to restrain the Legion from retaliating, and the affair died down.[104]

Throughout the last months of 1954 and early 1955, Jordan remained apprehensive of Israeli military intentions, specifically fearing that it sought an excuse to conquer the West Bank. Glubb and Jordanian officials repeatedly voiced this fear in London, no doubt sincerely (but also mindful of the fringe benefits that might accrue, such as more British arms and subsidies for the Legion to counter the purported threat). On 9 December 1954 Glubb wrote to the CIGS Field Marshal Sir John Harding, pleading for an explicit and public British commitment to intervene should Israel invade Jordanian territory. Glubb, an innately fair man, appreciated Israel's fear that 'ten or fifteen years hence' the Arab states might become 'strong and united' and able to overwhelm Israel in its present 'indefensible' frontiers. Hence, for Israel there was a 'profound temptation' to move its frontier to the Jordan River. Jordan, warned Glubb, would probably not

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[102] Black and Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars*, 123-5; Bums, *Arab and Israeli*, 164-5. Burns wrote that the assassinations were a 'contravention of the assurances' given by Ben-Gurion in Apr. 1956 that Israel would desist from further hostile acts. Bums commented: '[But] doubtless [Ben-Gurion] knew nothing about [the assassinations], except what he read in the papers.'

[103] Kyle, *Suez*, 132. Following the conquest of the Strip in the Sinai Campaign, the Israeli authorities destroyed four monuments commemorating Hafez (*Gaza Bulletin*, No. 5, FM, 26 Dec. 1956).

[104] W. E. Cole (Jerusalem) to SecState, 29 Nov. 1954, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 4 684a. 85; T. Wikeley (Jerusalem) to FO, 1 Dec. 1954, PRO FO 371-111084 VR1073/302; Nicholls to P.S. Falla, Levant Dept., FO, 7 Dec. 1954, PRO FO 371-111107 VR1091/264; FO to British Embassy (Amman), 3 Dec. 1954, PRO FO 371-111084.

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survive the fall of the West Bank: the government would be overthrown, the Europeans in Amman 'massacre[d]', and 'a million' refugees would pour into Transjordan from the West Bank, 'rendering confusion worse confounded'. If Britain failed to save Jordan, the Muslim world, 'in disgust', would probably turn to Russia.[105]

But, Jordanian patrolling and fears notwithstanding, terrorist infiltration from Jordan into Israel seems to have increased towards the end of 1954, culminating, on the night of 17/18 January 1955, with the murder, in their beds while asleep (claimed Israel), of two tractor drivers, members of the nearby Jerusalem Corridor settlement of Mevo Beitar, in a house in the former Arab village of `Ajjur.[106] The following day, Mevo Beitar members abducted and murdered an Arab peasant from Battir.[107]

Arab Legion intelligence quickly identified five of the Arab killers and arrested four. Two were refugees from `Ajjur and two from Deir Nakhkhas. The fifth gang member, a refugee from Ad Dawayima, managed to go into hiding in the Jericho area, where all five lived in refugee camps. The gang members claimed they had exchanged fire with Israeli guards but did not admit to the murders. Legion intelligence also identified and arrested the man who had sent the gang on their mission and had met them on their return, paying them 7 Jordanian dinars for the property they had stolen. The Jordanian police later found the stolen property in his home. Jordan assured Britain that the gang would be tried and punished with 'indefinite detention'.[108]

Sharett decided to allow a retaliatory strike to mollify the public.[109] But he knew that this would solve nothing: 'On the contrary I fear that [this] will serve as the initial link in a new cycle of violence along the border.'[110] But, before any reprisal could be launched, Jordan informed Israel that it had arrested some of the murderers. Sharett, backed by the Mapai ministerial caucus, suspended the operation, to 'my great relief'.[111] Israel (and Burns and British diplomats) pressed Jordan for severe and public punishment of the killers: heavy sentences would help Sharett fight the

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[105] Glubb to Field Marshal Sir J. Harding, WO, 9 Dec. 1954, PRO WO 216/854.

[106] Maj. A. Doron, Israel delegate to IJMAC, to senior Jordanian delegate IJMAC, 30 Dec. 1954, ISA FM 2429/8 bet; IJMAC report on the incident, 20 Jan. 1955, PRO FO 371- 115852.

[107] Lt.-Col. Gammon (Tel Aviv) to FO, 1 Feb. 1955, PRO FO 371-115896.

[108] `Armed Infiltration—`Ajjur Village, 18 Jan. 1955', GSO.II INT, Arab Legion, 13 Feb. 1955, with covering note J. C. B. Richmond (Amman) to J. F. Brewis, Levant Dept. FO, 17 Feb. 1955, PRO FO 371-115896 VR1092/23. Richmond wrote that the Legion report showed the gang had set out to rob, not to murder, but 'clearly their action amounted to murder'.

[109] E. B. Lawson (Tel Aviv) to SecState, 22 Jan. 1955, NA RG 59 684a.86/1-2255, Box 2691.

[110] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 670, 672-3, entries for 18 Jan. 1955.

[111] Ibid. iii. 676, 677, entries for 23 and 24 Jan. 1955.

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Activists; light sentences would help them.[112] As predicted, the killers were eventually sentenced to 'indefinite imprisonment'.[113]

But, while Israel had desisted from retaliation, there is little doubt that the `Ajjur murders were among the cumulative factors considered, consciously or subconsciously, when the Israeli leaders decided on the Gaza Raid a few weeks later.[114]

Following the murders, Jordan reinforced its anti-infiltration measures; the Gaza Raid further heightened the state of alert along the Jordanian frontier. The Jordanians realized that Sharett's policy of restraint either had been scrapped or was on the verge of collapse, and that they too could become the target of renewed IDF raiding.

The Har-Zion Affair

But the next major infiltration incident was, unusually, from Israel into Jordan, when, on the night of 4/5 March 1955, four Israeli ex-paratroopers— Meir Har-Zion and Ze'ev Slutzky-Amit, both of Kibbutz `Ein Harod, 'Amiram Hirschfeld of Kibbutz Degania Bet, and Yoram Nahari of Nahalal—raided a small bedouin encampment some nine kilometres inside the West Bank, at Wadi al Ghar west of Kibbutz `Ein Gedi, and captured six bedouins of the Jahaleen and `Azazme tribes. The raiders interrogated each of the captives and then murdered five of them (one, a 16-year-old), four with knives and one with a burst of automatic fire. The sixth was sent back to his tribe to tell what had happened. The raiders then returned to Israel.[115]

The raid was led by Har-Zion, who had temporarily left the army following the murder of his sister, Shoshana, and her boyfriend, Oded Wagmeister, by bedouin at Wadi al Ghar, in the Judaean Desert, where the two had gone on an illegal hike three weeks before. Har-Zion and his friends had set out on 4 March to avenge the murders. 'I had to do something,' he later told an interviewer,

> something similar to the things we did in those days You made sure all the time [in Unit 101] that murderers received punishment . . . I couldn't have

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[112] Tekoah to Israel missions, (London, etc.), 25 Jan. 1955, ISA FM 2949/14; Tekoah to Israel missions, (London, etc.), 30 Jan. 1955, ISA FM 2949/15; 'Report on a Conversation with General Burns on 10 Feb. [1955]', Tekoah, undated (but with covering note dated 11 Feb. 1955), ISA FM 2429/8 bet. By law, Jordan could not charge its nationals with murder if the crime had been committed outside Jordan.

[113] 'BMEO Weekly Political Summary No. 11 for Week Ending Mar. 15 1955', PRO FO 371-115462 V1013/14.

[114] Nicholls to Eden, 8 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115898 R1092/78; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 797, entry for 26 Feb. 1955.

[115] IJMAC resolution, 10 Mar. 1955, ISA FM 2436/4; Doron to IDF General Staff officer for MACs, 10 Mar. 1955, ISA FM 2436/4; Hommel to Cordier, 17 Mar. 1955, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-28.

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behaved differently. . . . All our thinking at the time took that course, that the spilling of our blood would not go unpunished.[116]

But the five murdered bedouin apparently had had no hand in the killings, and, as Ben-Gurion pointed out at the Cabinet meeting of 6 March, the Israeli raiding party had learnt nothing from the bedouin before murdering them. The Israelis apparently also did not know enough Arabic to make sense of the bedouins' answers.[117]

Ben-Gurion initially pressed, or went through the motions of pressing, for the trial of the four raiders. So did Sharett, who reasoned that, if Har-Zion and his friends were not tried, 'we will not have the fight to demand that neighbouring countries punish murderers [of Jews]'.[118] The Cabinet initially decided that the four should be prosecuted, but there were serious legal obstacles to trying Israelis for a murder committed in Jordan. Extradition was out of the question. Ben-Gurion, having advocated a trial to show 'the army and the youth' that such behaviour would not be countenanced,[119] soon changed his tune. On 10 March he justified Har-Zion's refusal to co-operate with the police and criticized Sharett's publication of the four suspects' names.[120]

Ben-Gurion began to stonewall, supporting the army's refusal to cooperate with the police. Sharett soon learnt that the IDF had been involved in the raid: Sharon had supplied Har-Zion and his friends with 'arms and food', had driven them part of the way to the border in a paratroop battalion vehicle, and had sent paratroops to meet them on their return. Sharon had also 'ordered' the four not to co-operate with the police. Sharett suspected that Dayan had also had advance knowledge of the raid.[121]

There was much moral wringing of hands and even more effective foot-dragging. After some twenty days in remand, the four walked away scot free. There was no trial or punishment of any sort;[122] Har-Zion was soon

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[116] Har-Zion, *Pirkei Yoman*, 140.

[117] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 817, entry for 6 Mar. 1955. On returning to Israel, the four made a full confession to the military police, but it was deemed inadmissible as evidence in the subsequent civilian proceedings.

[118] Ibid. iii. 815-16, entry for 5 Mar. 1955. Nicholls later explicitly contrasted the release of the four with Jordan's arrest of the `Ajjur killers (Nicholls to E. M. Rose, 29 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115899 VR1092/102; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 867, entry for 28 Mar. 1955).

[119] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 6 Mar. 1955, BGA; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iii. 817-18, entry for 6 Mar. 1955.

[120] Ibid. iii. 830,828, entries for 10 Mar. 1955.

[121] Ibid. 832, 834, entry for 11 Mar. 1955, and 870, entry for 28 Mar. 1955; and iv. 995, entry for 16 May 1955. For the sake of propriety, Ben-Gurion later 'severely reprimanded' Sharon for his part in the affair (ibid. iv. 1087, entry for 10 July 1955), though this apparently seems to have had no effect on his military career.

[122] On 10 July 1955 the Cabinet decided to re-examine the 'circumstances of the murder of the four [*sic*] bedouins' and reconsider a trial, which Sharett opposed ('Protocol of the Cabinet Meeting, 10 July 1955', ISA RG 77, 7265/5; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 1087, entry for 10 July 1955).

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back in the army. The outcome largely reflected Ben-Gurion's position. From the first, he had been loath to punish four of his favourite warriors, and a trial would almost inevitably have brought to light other morally questionable deeds of Unit 101 and the paratroop battalion. IDF and kibbutz lobbying had also contributed to the frustration of due process.[123] Sharett, pondering the 'contempt for human [i.e. Arab] life' and the elevation of revenge to a supreme moral value that were manifest in the episode, noted in his diary: 'The dark soul of the Bible has come alive among the sons of Nahalal and `Ein Harod.'[124] The affair was a contributory factor in Britain's decision to hold up delivery to Israel of six Centurion tanks.[125]

The Radicalization of Jordan and the Drift towards Belligerency, late 1955-June 1956

In September 1956, just before the IDF raid on the Qalqilya police fort, King Hussein told Britain's ambassador to Amman, Sir Charles Duke, that, since Qibya, the Jordanians had 'done their best to keep the border quiet, had imprisoned infiltrators and so on', only to be rewarded by more Israeli bullying.[126]

Hussein's description was not quite accurate. Jordanian policy between 1949 and the end of 1955 had, indeed, been to avoid border troubles and to curb infiltration. But the policy had had its up and downs, with the level of effectiveness of Jordanian controls determined by changing circumstances in the Arab world and by Israeli operations. In various areas at various times local Jordanian authorities, particularly National Guardsmen, had co-operated with infiltrators. But generally the authorities had cleaved to the policy, under the overall orchestration of General Glubb.

But matters began to change with the deterioration of Israeli-Egyptian relations along the Gaza border and with the increasing penetration of the Hashemite Kingdom, from mid-1955, by radicalizing Egyptian influences and agents. The latter gradually subverted the position of the British officers who had commanded the Legion since its inception in 1920-1, spreading pan-Arab, anti-imperialist, republican, and anti-Zionist doctrine.[127]

The first major fruit of this Egyptian agitation was Hussein's ungracious dismissal of Glubb and the forced resignation of most of the Legion's

[123] Ibid. iii. 840-1, entry for 13 Mar. 1955, and iv. 941-2, entry for 17 Apr. 1955; Miriam Schwartzbart to Ben-Gurion, 25 Mar. 1955, BGA, Correspondence.

[124] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, iv. 941-2, entry for 17 Apr. 1955.

[125] 'BMEO Weekly Political Summary No. 11 for Week Ending March 15 1955', PRO FO 317-115462 V1013/14; untitled memo. by Nutting, 7 Mar. 1955, PRO FO 371-115897 VR1092/71.

[126] C. B. Duke to FO, 12 Sept. 1956, PRO PREM 11/1454.

[127] U. Dann, *King Hussein and the Challenge of Arab Radicalism: Jordan, 1955-1967* (New York, 1989), ch. 1.

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senior British officers in March 1956.[128] Some of these men were replaced by members of the so-called 'Young Officers Movement', a clandestine group in the mould of the Egyptian 'Free Officers' who had overthrown the *ancien régime* in Cairo four years earlier. Among these 'progressive' officers was `Ali Abu Nawar, Hussein's friend and aide de camp. The door gradually opened to Jordanian-Fedayeen co-operation.

Despite stepped-up efforts by Glubb to curb infiltration,[129] the first rustles of change were already apparent in the final months of 1955. The Czech arms deal and the Fedayeen operations from Gaza had a strong impact in Amman; Egyptian pressure and penetration began to take their toll. There were already enigmatic reports in October 1955 about the welcome accorded in the West Bank to the Fedayeen squad from Gaza that killed an Israeli tractor driver on 4 October near Moshav Gilat.[130] By November, Israeli suspicions and accusations had hardened. The IDF told the British military attaché in Tel Aviv that the 'Jordanian authorities' were 'permitting' the Egyptian military attaché and his agents in Jordan 'to organize gangs', and National Guardsmen were turning 'a blind eye' to infiltration.[131]

The March 1956 ouster of Glubb and most of the Legion's other non-Arab officers seemed to clarify matters. The kingdom began falling into step, at least partially, with Egyptian goals and activities. On 20 March Duke reported that, despite assurances by Abu Nawar that the Legion would continue to 'exercise restraint' along the border,

> the calls for Arab Legion action against Israel now prevalent on the West Bank, inflammatory speeches, from everyone from the King downwards, about 'restoring the usurped homeland', and the widespread enthusiasm manifested during the collecting campaign for funds for the National Guard, may well mean that less trouble will be taken to avoid incidents.[132]

Indeed, matters quickly went beyond taking 'less trouble' to prevent infiltration. The Gaza Fedayeen campaign of April 1956 generated wild

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[128] For Hussein's defence of the dismissal, see Hussein, *Uneasy*, 129-50. Hussein (p. 130) maintained that he had dismissed Glubb because of differences over 'the role of Arab officers' in the Legion and over defence strategy.

[129] Duke to FO, 19 Nov. 1955, PRO FO 371-115909 VR1092/416; minute by Laurence, 22 Nov. 1955, PRO FO 371-115909 VR1092/427; British Embassy, Amman, to Levant Dept., FO, 1 Dec. 1955, PRO FO 371-115916; 'Reference Memo. No. 1827/5 of Nov. 28, 1955, from Embassy Tel Aviv to Levant Department, Foreign Office', Arab Legion memo., 10 Dec. 1955, PRO FO 371-121845; British Embassy, Amman, to British Embassy, Tel Aviv, 20 Dec. 1955, PRO FO 371-115911; untitled, undated, collection of Arab press references to infiltration, ISA FM 2439/6.

[130] P. Westlake (Tel Aviv) to H. A. Dudgeon (Amman), 22 Oct. 1955, PRO FO 371-115906.

[131] Nicholls to FO, 11 Nov. 1955, PRO FO 371-115909 VR1092/409; British Embassy, Tel Aviv, to British Embassy, Amman, 28 Dec. 1955, PRO FO 371-115911 VR1092/473.

[132] Duke to E. M. Rose, Levant Dept., FO, 20 Mar. 1956, PRO FO 371-121466 VJ1015.

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enthusiasm in Jordan, some hailing it as the start of the long awaited 'war of liberation' against the Zionist 'usurper'. A former Jordanian minister, Shafik Atsheidat, wrote that, while traditional Jordanian policy had been to prevent 'refugees from crossing the . . . borders' and to punish infiltrators, now

> we have to change our policy and to prepare an army from among the refugees— an army which will set out daily and nightly, from every camp and village, through every road and wadi along the entire length of the border established by imperialism, and into every area of the region called Israel to burn, murder and destroy and to exact vengeance for those who fell, and to prepare for the great battle ahead. . . . For us in Jordan the time has come, particularly since General Glubb's exit—Glubb who was Israel's friend, the enemy of the refugees—to kill 100 Jews for every Arab, to spread panic throughout their state, to destroy a town for every act of aggression against an Arab village . . . until the hour of the great battle arrives.[133]

Some of the Gaza-based Fedayeen who had attacked Israel in the first half of April withdrew not to the Gaza Strip but to Jordan. There, to Israel's chagrin, they were generally accorded a hero's welcome. Israeli intelligence reported that, while a few had been detained by the Legion, 'squads of Fedayeen who reached the Hebron Hills received an enthusiastic reception, and festivities and parties were organised in their honour by the local authorities'. The dozens of Fedayeen who had arrived in April were hosted and quartered in Legion camps.[134]

Israeli intelligence pin-pointed April 1956 as the month in which the Jordanians themselves began to recruit and organize Fedayeen. With Glubb out of the way, the 'Young Officers' were given their head. Legion officers toured border villages in search of recruits, signing them up in regional National Guard battalion headquarters and district police headquarters, in Jerusalem, Qalqilya, Jenin, and Hebron. The recruits, mainly refugees and (according to Israeli intelligence) 'known criminals', with a sprinkling of West Bank border villagers, were promised that their salaries would be paid by the Legion. Groups of volunteers were trained in

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[133] 'Infiltrate—Kill the Jews,' trans. from *Al Mithak*, 19 (?) Apr. 1956, ISA FM 2440/7. See also Plascov, *Palestinian Refugees*, 101-2.

[134] 'The Establishment of a Fedayeen Organisation in Jordan', IDF Intelligence Branch, undated (but from late May or early June 1956), and covering note, N. Ben-Horin to Y. Meroz, Israel Embassy, Washington, 7 June 1956, ISA FM 2479/13 bet; M. Schneerson to foreign minister, 15 Apr. 1956, ISA FM 2440/7. Schneerson was relating what Harkabi, the DMI, had told him. In mid-Apr. most of the Gaza-based Fedayeen who had retreated to Jordan were flown back to Egypt. On 12 Apr. IAF jets intercepted an Arab Airways passenger liner *en route* to Cairo ten kilometres inside Jordan south of the Dead Sea. The pilot assured the Israelis, over the radio, that he had no Fedayeen on board and the plane was allowed to continue on its course. The Israelis had apparently got the wrong plane. Several Fedayeen had returned to Cairo on 12 Apr.—but on a Misr Air flight (L. D. Mallory (Amman) to SecState, 14 Apr. 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/4-1456, Box 2698).

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sabotage in Legion camps and, at the end of their training, sent on missions across the border to prove 'their loyalty and willingness to act'. By the end of May, Israel believed that 'at least 200' Fedayeen had been recruited by Jordan in the West Bank and were operating 'with the Legion Headquarters' knowledge', though apparently not under its direct control. Israel had 'lists of the names' of Legion and police officers involved in recruitment and the names of the main 'gang members'. During the following months the Jordanian authorities were reportedly 'press-ganging' people to join these 'commando groups'—or, as one observer put it: 'Gardeners, servants and even businessmen were being snatched by the Army. '[135]

All this while, the new Legion commanders, including Abu Nawar, who in May became chief of staff, continued to reassure Britain and the United Nations—and, through them, Israel—that nothing had changed. On 26 April Jordan provided the UN (and Israel) with official 'assurances' of its intention to maintain the cease-fire.

Many Legion officers probably supported the Glubb policy, if only for fear of the consequences of renewed IDF raiding. Others, enamoured with Nasser and anti-Israeli activism and probably egged on by local Egyptian agents and subsidies, favoured opening a new Jordanian Fedayeen front against Israel. But they, too, exercised caution, avoiding the immediate full activation of the newly created squads. Like the Egyptians, they saw the benefits of continuing to profess non-belligerence and non-responsibility while proceeding with the recruitment and training of Fedayeen. It is unclear whether any of the March-June 1956 infiltration incidents along the Jordan border were the work of the new squads, though it seems probable. Israel charged that the raids were carried out with at least official Jordanian 'connivance'.

On 23 April four Tahal (Israel water company) workers were murdered by infiltrators from Jordan on the Beersheba-Eilat road. On 15 May a motorcyclist and his passenger were wounded in an ambush on the Wadi `Ara road. On 24 May a tractor driver was killed near Qubeiba, in the south. On 5 June infiltrators shot and wounded two workers near Yad

[135] US military attaché (Tel Aviv) to Army Dept., 21 May 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/52156, Box 2699; 'The Establishment of a Fedayeen Organisation in Jordan', ISA FM 2479/ 13 bet; FM to Israel Embassy, London, 29 May 1956, ISA FM 2592/18; British Embassy, Baghdad, to Rose, 2 Aug. 1956, PRO FO 371-121468 VJ1015/235; British Embassy, Amman, to R. M. Hadow, Levant Dept., FO, 16 Aug. 1956, PRO FO 121459 VJ1015/240. The Jordanian chief of staff later told the UN secretary-general that these recruits were 'commandos' being trained for eventual inclusion in 'the regular Army'. The explanation seems thin. Had the Legion wanted to establish commando units, it would have recruited soldiers from the ranks of its infantry, not from among border refugees, villagers, and ex-criminals. Hammarskjold also seems to have taken Abu Nawar's explanation with a pinch of salt ('I hope this declaration can be taken seriously') (Hammarskjold to S. Lloyd, 1 Aug. 1956, PRO FO 371-121744).

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Hana. On 24 June Jordanian troops fired on Israeli workers across the line near Sde Eliahu, in the Beit Shean Valley, killing two IDF soldiers and wounding a civilian.[136]

British observers characterized the incidents of April-May as 'minor' but 'disquieting', and indicative of a 'relaxation of [Glubb's] policy of restraint'. Ben-Gurion, conceding that the degree of official Jordanian responsibility was unclear, complained to Burns on 28 June. Burns said that it was 'difficult to know' whether there was any government in Jordan at all. Abu Nawar gave Duke 'the most categoric assurances' that the new officers did not intend to relax control or allow 'wilder spirits' to dictate policy along the border. Indeed, Duke reported in June, Abu Nawar's deputy, Sadiq ash Shera'a, had toured the border and enjoined troops (and perhaps villagers) to maintain 'discipline and restraint'.[137]

While Jordan officially continued to insist that it was doing its utmost to curb infiltration,[138] there was a sharp increase in the incidence and severity of border incidents during July and August, reinforcing Israel's suspicions (and assertions) that the Jordanians were not lifting a finger to curb infiltration, if they were not actually promoting it.[139]

The Renewal of Israeli Retaliation against Jordan, Ar Rahwa, and Gharandal, September 1956

Through the first half of 1956, Israel maintained a policy of restraint towards Jordan. But the sharp increase in terrorist incidents during the summer changed matters. On 9 July mining attacks and ambushes near `Afula (Jezreel Valley), Wadi `Ara, and `Ein Hush (Hatzeva), on the road to Eilat, left two Israelis dead and two wounded. (A convoy system was instituted that summer for traffic to and from Eilat.) Another civilian was killed on the road between Yehud and Wilhelma on 13 July. Two days later a worker was injured by a mine at Castel, west of Jerusalem.[140]

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[136] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1397, entry for 24 Apr. 1956; 'The Situation on the Israel—Jordan Frontier', press release by Israel Delegation to the UN, 17 July 1956, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-52; 'Jordanian Aggression since the Cease-Fire, 26 Apr.-10 July 1956', unsigned and undated, ISA FM 2949/3.

[137] Duke to Shuckburgh, 21 June 1956, PRO FO 371-121743 VR1074/356; 'Record of Meeting with General Burns [Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir, Dayan, Tekoah, Vigier] on 28 June 1956', ISA FM 2949/3; Col. M. Sa'di, senior Jordan delegate, IJMAC, to chief of staff, UNTSO, 16 June 1956, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-53.

[138] Hammarskjold to Lloyd, 1 Aug. 1956, PRO FO 371-121744; Wikeley to Duke, 13 Aug. 1956, PRO FO 371-121469 VJ1015/242.

[139] Maj. R. Hillel, chief Israel delegate, IJMAC, to Armistice Matters Dept., FM, etc., 25 Sept. 1956, ISA FM 2436/4 bet.

[140] 'The Situation on the Israel-Jordan Frontier', UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-52; 'Jordanian Aggression since the Cease-Fire, 26 Apr.-10 July 1956', ISA FM 2949/3; 'Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council Pursuant to the Council's Resolutions of 4 Apr. and 4 June 1956 on the Palestine Question', Annex II, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-53; Ben-Gurion

(Footnote continued on next page)

Arab raiding along the borders intensified in late summer, with the focus on southern Israel. There was renewed raiding—probably by Hafez's Fedayeen—from the Gaza Strip and into the Auja DMZ. At Shelah, on 27 July, two Israeli water-drilling workers were wounded in a Fedayeen attack. That same day, two civilians were wounded by a mine in the DMZ and a car was ambushed (with no casualties). The next day, a UN vehicle hit a mine and one observer was killed. Six Israelis were wounded in minings on 14 and 16 August around Sdeh Boqer. Later that month an IDF soldier was killed and four were wounded near Ketzi`ot.[141]

But the most lethal raids were in the `Arava, by raiders from southern Jordan. On the morning of 16 August infiltrators ambushed a bus and two IDF escort jeeps on their way to Eilat, some twenty kilometres north of Be'er Menuha, killing a civilian and three soldiers and wounding nine.[142]

Choosing a low-key approach, Israel struck back at Egypt on the night of 16/17 August, killing nine Egyptian soldiers in a series of ambushes inside the Strip. Sharett was happy with the switch to small-scale ambushes. For years, he wrote, he had called for exactly such small-scale actions— and had repeatedly been told that they were 'impractical'. But the 'real' reason for the IDF's preference for large-scale reprisals was 'the desire to provoke the other side into war', he wrote. 'Now it was clear that another method was possible!'[143] A fortnight later, after two Israelis had been killed when their car hit a mine in the Negev on 30 August, three IDF squads killed thirteen Egyptians and Palestinians in ambushes inside the Strip that night.[144]

But the counter-raiding against Egypt did not solve the problem on the Jordanian border, where several Israelis were killed in mid-September in IDF-Arab Legion clashes and infiltrator raids. In the most serious

(Footnote continued from previous page)

Diary, entry for 14 July 1956, BGA; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, vi. 1565, entry for 14 July 1956. Ben-Gurion, incidentally, regarded the 13 July attack near Yehud as 'perplexing', and was apparently not certain the murder had been committed by infiltrators. Dayan demanded a reprisal in the 'same area' but Ben-Gurion, afraid of 'complications', preferred the `Arava. But the planned raid was postponed. Sharett opposed retaliating for the murder. On 13 July Jordan announced that the recent infiltrator attacks were 'individual' initiatives and not consistent with Jordanian policy, which sought to curtail infiltration.

[141] 'Fedayeen Activity Prior [to] the Sinai Campaign', unsigned (but probably by FM), undated, ISA FM 2952/2. Some observers—e.g. Burns—suggested that these Fedayeen raids were a reprisal for the assassination in mid-July of colonels Hafez and Mustafa, the Egyptian intelligence chiefs in Gaza and Amman (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, vi. 1635, entry for 16 Aug. 1956).

[142] 'Report by the Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organization Dated 20 Aug. 1956 on Incidents Occurring on 16-17 Aug. 1956', UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-53; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, vi. 1635, entry for 16 Aug. 1956; Ben-Gurion Diary, entries for 16-17 Aug. 1956, BGA.

[143] 'Report by the Chief of Staff of the Truce Supervision Organization Dated 20 Aug. 1956 on Incidents Occurring on 16-17 Aug. 1956', UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-53; W. L. Hamilton jun. (Tel Aviv) to State Dept., 23 Aug. 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/8-2356 HBS, Box 2695; Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 17 Aug. 1956, BGA; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, vi. 1637-9, entry for 17 Aug. 1956.

[144] Ibid. vi. 1678-9, entries for 30 and 31 Aug. 1956.

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incident, on 10 September west of Idna, in the Hebron foothills, Jordanian National Guardsmen attacked a thirty-man IDF unit—all university students—on a map-reading exercise 100 metres inside Israel. The unit had been ordered to keep 500 metres away from the border but, for convenience's sake, had strayed closer. After the firefight, the Jordanians dragged six of the Israelis—either dead, wounded, or uninjured—across the demarcation line into Jordan and finished them off, mutilating some of the corpses (genitalia were cut off). Later in the day, a Legion unit had to fire on National Guardsmen and villagers in order to get hold of the six bodies, which were returned to Israel. Jordan charged that the Israelis had been attacked after they had crossed into Jordan. Israel maintained that bloodstains in the area and signs of dragging on some of the bodies supported the Israeli version. UNTSO investigators subsequently dismissed Jordan's version and the IJMAC, in emergency session on 17 September, held Jordan responsible.[145]

Next day, Dayan proposed to Ben-Gurion that the IDF blow up parts of Idna after evacuating the inhabitants. Ben-Gurion agreed, but said the operation required Cabinet approval. Dayan proved unable to persuade the ministers to sanction the operation. But, conceding the need for a reprisal, the Cabinet approved an IDF attack on a 'military objective' in the Hebron Hills.[146]

That night, 11/12 September, two paratroop companies, commanded by Sharon, blew up the Khirbet ar Rahwa police fort (and a nearby, empty school building), on the Hebron-Beersheba road (Operation Jonathan) and ambushed a column of Jordanian reinforcements. In all, twenty (some reports say twenty-nine) Jordanian soldiers and policemen died and a number were wounded. One Israeli soldier was killed and three wounded.

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[145] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 11 Sept. 1956, BGA; FM to Israel embassies (Moscow, etc.), 12 Sept. 1956, ISA FM 2949/15; 'Report by the Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization Dated 26 Sept. 1956 Concerning Incidents on the Jordan-Israel Armistice Demarcation Line', UNTSO, 27 Sept. 1956, and 'Note to Correspondents', 12 Sept. 1956, unsigned (but by UNTSO), both in UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-53; S. B. Yeshaya, Jerusalem District Commissioner, to director general, FM, 14 Sept. 1956, ISA FM 2402/12. Burns (*Arab and Israeli*, 165) called the Israeli exercise close to the border, though on the Israeli side, 'a very stupid business', and discounted the charges of mutilation. Dayan was angry about the incident, seeing in the exercise close to the border a violation of his directives, issued after an Israeli soldier had been killed in a similar incident near Umm al Fahm a few days before. But he distinguished between the need for 'self-criticism' and the Jordanians' behaviour, which should not go unpunished (Dayan, *Avnei*, 224-5). Following the incident, on 21 Sept., and in order not to provoke hostilities that could jeopardize the implementation of the Franco-Israeli arms deal, Dayan ordered patrolling along the border limited to the minimum needed to protect Israel's settlements (Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 226). In describing the 10 Sept. incident, Bar-On (pp. 225-6) refers simply to the killing of 'six Israeli students' by West Bank villagers, without mentioning that the students were armed IDF soldiers (of the 'Atuda HaAkedemit), in uniform, on exercise. He also implies that the attack was planned by the Jordanian authorities—which does not seem to have been the case. Some reports say that a seventh Israeli died in the incident.

[146] Dayan, *Avnei*, 224-5.

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UN observers found one of the Jordanian dead 'with his hands tied behind his back'.[147]

Jordan complained that such reprisals struck at just those Jordanian troops who were trying to curb infiltration. The troops at the Rahwa police fort had had nothing to do with the Idna incident.[148] General Abu Nawar threatened that a repetition would force Jordan to 'retaliate in force, cost what it might', and this could lead to war. King Hussein 'endorsed' Abu Nawar's remarks.[149]

But the 'cycle of blood-letting' continued.[150] Mere hours after the end of the Rawha operation, a band of infiltrators struck again in the `Arava, murdering three Israeli Druse watchmen at an oil-drilling camp at `Ein Ofarim, near Hatzeva. Several days after the incident, Jordanian police detained the killers. According to Israeli sources, the suspects confessed and the arms stolen from the watchmen were found in their possession. This the Jordanians denied, and, according to Israel, the suspects were freed on Hussein's personal order, without trial or punishment. The Arab Legion maintained that the suspects were still in detention and being investigated.[151]

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[147] IJMAC resolution of 19 Sept. 1956 on the Rahwa raid, ISA FM 2436/43; Dayan, *Avnei*, 224-5; Ben-Gurion Diary, entries for 11-12 Sept. 1956, BGA; 'Note to Correspondents', 12 Sept. 1956, unsigned (but by UNTSO), UNA DAG-I/2.1.4-53; Bums, *Arab and Israeli*, 166. Meir Har-Zion, who had returned to service, was severely wounded in the operation. An IDF doctor saved his life by cutting open his trachea with a pen-knife and inserting a rubber tube into his lungs, enabling him to breathe (Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 15 Sept. 1956, BGA). The previous night, a small IDF unit attacked an Egyptian post in al Qusaima, killing eight Egyptian soldiers. The attack, which had not received prior Cabinet approval, was an apparent retaliation for the blowing-up of a section of the rail line to Beersheba, in which no one was hurt, two days earlier (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, vi. 1693, entry for 12 Sept. 1956; Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 11 Sept. 1956, BGA). Sharett, now out of office, was critical of the Rahwa raid and wrote that it satisfied the Israeli public's 'desire for revenge'. He sarcastically referred to an editorial in the *Ma`ariv* afternoon paper, which had called 'an eye for an eye' 'a creative and positive principle'.

[148] Maj. R. Hillel, IJMAC, to Armistice Affairs Dept., FM, etc., 25 Sept. 1956, ISA FM 2436/4 bet.

[149] Duke to FO, 12 Sept. 1956, PRO PREM 11/1454.

[150] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, vi. 1695, entry for 13 Sept. 1956.

[151] Tekoah to Bums, 10 Oct. 1956, and Bums to Tekoah, 12 Oct. 1956, both in UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-53. Sharon (*Warrior*, 136) claims that the murderers of the `Ein Ofarim three were the same terrorists who killed five Israeli potash workers a month later, on 4 Oct, near Sodom. Shortly after the second attack, according to Sharon, the Jordanian authorities arrested the gang members for smuggling. Israel then gave the Jordanians the names of the gang members. Hussein's response, according to Sharon, was 'immediately [to] release them from jail'. Israel believed, on the basis of ballistics tests, that the 4 Oct. attack was committed by the same bedouin gang that had carried out previous raids in the `Arava, in Apr. (four Tahal men killed), July (two killed in Hatzeva convoy) and Aug. (four killed, nine wounded in Eilat bound convoy). But ballistics did not link these raiders to the killings at `Ein Ofarim (though Israeli investigators did' not role out the possibility). On 8 Oct. Israel transmitted the names of five of the suspected gang members to the Jordanian authorities: Matlak Shukshuk, Salem Adwan, Salim Abu Shusha, Salama A'id, and Salama Salem ar Rahma. Israel also informed Jordan that 'the most active' infiltration supporter from among the local Jordanian commanders was the OC of the Gharandal police fort, Murashah Ayush Sarsak (Tekoah to Bums, 10 Oct. 1956, UNA, DAG-1/2.1.4-53; 'Gang Activity in the `Arava', IDF Intelligence Branch, 7 Oct. 1956, ISA 2949/18).

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But the argument was somewhat academic. On the night of 13/14 September Israel avenged the `Ein Ofarim killings with a major reprisal against the Jordanian police fort at Gharandal (some eighty kilometres from `Ein Ofarim). This target was selected because the police fort opposite `Ein Ofarim (at Dahal) was deemed by the IDF commanders 'topographically difficult', and also because the 'co-ordinator' of the infiltrator attacks in the `Arava, 'apparently an Egyptian agent', was in Gharandal.[152] Ben-Gurion decided on the reprisal without Cabinet discussion or approval. [153]

In Operation Gulliver (named after the veteran paratrooper, who had died in a raid the year before), a small paratroop force stormed the Gharandal fort, killing nine (one report says fourteen) Jordanian policemen and members of a desert camel patrol unit, and wounding four others. Two civilians were killed and two wounded. One Israeli was killed and twelve wounded. The fort was blown up, and a nearby tent encampment and an empty school structure were destroyed.[154]

The raid caused 'strong feeling' in Jordan. But most foreign observers understood that it was a reprisal for the killing of the three Druse and other attacks in the `Arava rather than 'something more sinister' or 'an effort to provoke Jordan'.[155] But Jordan, fearing imminent large-scale Israeli attack, sought external help. Hussein flew off to Habaniya, in Iraq, on 14 September for a meeting with his cousin, King Faisal, on stationing an Iraqi division in Jordan.[156] Egypt sent a military delegation to Amman and three planeloads of arms for the National Guard,[157] and Britain made 'strong representations' to Israel to calm everyone down.[158]

The Ramat Rachel Massacre

A bare ten days later the worst border atrocity against Israelis since the 1954 Scorpions Pass Massacre took place—and this time the Arab Legion, not infiltrators, was responsible. Shortly after noon on 23 September, a lone Arab Legion machine-gunner (or, according to Israel, a number of Legionnaires) opened fire from the Mar Elyas position on a gathering of

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[152] Ben-Gurion diary, entry for 13 Sept. 1956, BGA.

[153] Dayan, *Avnei*, 226.

[154] The sources differ on the number of Jordanians killed. The 'Report of the Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization Dated 26 Sept. 1956 Concerning Incidents on the Jordan-Israel Armistice Demarcation Line' (UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-53) says eleven Jordanians were killed and six wounded. Wallach and Lissak (eds.) (*Atlas*, 122) say that sixteen Jordanians died in the raid.

[155] p. Westlake (Tel Aviv) to FO, 14 Sept. 1956, and Duke to FO, 14 Sept. 1956, both in PRO PREM 11-1454; FO to UK delegation to UN in New York, 19 Sept. 1956, PRO FO 371-121744.

[156] Duke to FO, 14 Sept. 1956 (cable no. 1284), PRO PREM 11-1454.

[157] 'Egyptian Arms for the Jordan Arab Army', minute by R. M. Hadow, 24 Sept. 1956, PRO FO 371-121539; Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 227.

[158] FO to British Embassy, Amman, 15 Sept. 1956, PRO PREM 11-1454.

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some 500 Israeli officials and archeologists at Kibbutz Ramat Rachel, across the wadi, just south of Jerusalem. Four people were killed and sixteen wounded. Jordan claimed that the attack had been the work of a lone, 'deranged' Jordanian soldier, who had been detained immediately and was 'under examination'. Israel ridiculed the story as 'preposterous' and said that survivors of the attack, which had lasted over a minute, had heard 'two' machine-guns firing on automatic, and single shots, apparently from a rifle.[159]

Israeli leaders were 'very indignant' that UNTSO had endorsed the Jordanian version only a few hours after the shooting and before a full investigation. Ben-Gurion brushed aside Burns's 'exhortations' to restraint: the Arab states could not be allowed to 'terrorize' Israel and 'endanger [its] existence'.[160] Ben-Gurion saw the attack as reflecting Arab policy towards Israel, resulting (however many Legionnaires had taken part) from the anti-Israeli message broadcast by the Jordanian government to its troops. Sharett's successor as foreign minister, Golda Meir, warned that, if Amman was unable to control its soldiers, 'somebody would have to take over'; the psychological state of Jordan's soldiers was of no interest to Israel.[161]

After a full investigation, and much to Israel's chagrin, UNTSO and the IJMAC determined that 'a preponderance of evidence' supported the Jordanian version of a lone, berserk gunman. Israel offered no persuasive evidence to refute the findings.[162]

Husan

A major IDF reprisal was, as Burns feared, more or less inevitable. The 24 September murder and mutilation by infiltrators of an Israeli girl and the wounding of her mother, while they were gathering wood near Moshav 'Aminadav, south-west of Jerusalem, and the murder of an Israeli tractor driver and the wounding of another either by Jordanian troops or by

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[159] 'The Jordan Attack at Ramat Rachel', Israel Delegation to UN, 24 Sept. 1956, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-53.

[160] 'Note to Correspondents', UNTSO, 24 Sept. 1956, giving the text of the UNTSO HQ press release of 23 Sept. 1956; Bums to Ben-Gurion, 23 Sept. 1956; Burns to secretary-general, 24 Sept. 1956; Ben-Gurion to Bums, 25 Sept. 1956; Burns to Ben-Gurion, 26 Sept. 1956, all in UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-53.

[161] Tekoah to Israel missions (New York, etc.), 24 Sept. 1956, ISA FM 2949/3; Burns to secretary-general, 24 Sept. 1956, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-53.

[162] 'Memorandum of Action Taken in Connection with the Ramat Rachel and Husan Incidents which Occurred on 23 and 25/6 Sept. 1956', Bums, undated, and IJMAC resolution, 1 Oct. 1956, both in UNA DAG-112.1.4-53. Testimony by Israeli survivors, that several Jordanian weapons had been fired, from different directions, was deemed unreliable. Bums eventually heard (and believed) that Ramat Rachel had been a revenge attack—the perpetrator's brother having been killed in the IDF raid on ar Rahwa, ten days before (Burns, *Arab and Israeli*, 167).

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infiltrators near Kibbutz Ma'oz Haim, in the Beit Shean Valley, only added to Israeli passions. In the first attack, which Dayan believed was carried out by Legionnaires, the girl was first shot and then stabbed to death. The killers then cut off and took one of her hands and returned to Jordanian territory.[163]

Ben Gurion wanted 'vigorous' retaliation, but decided to limit it when Shimon Peres returned from France with an invitation to the Saint Germain Conference: Ben-Gurion did not want to upset the French. The Cabinet, at an emergency meeting next morning, approved a reprisal that would avoid civilian casualties; only Religious Affairs Minister Shapira opposed the raid. Dayan's original proposed target, deep in Jordanian territory, was dropped and he was empowered to choose between the Surif and Husan police forts. He opted for Husan. Burns, tipped off at 13.00 hours about the impending retaliatory strike, tried to contact Ben-Gurion or Golda Meir to head it off, but found neither available.[164]

That night (25/6 September), IDF paratroops hit the Husan police fort and nearby Legion positions, killing thirty-seven Legionnaires and National Guardsmen and two civilians, and wounding eleven. The fort and a school in the semi-abandoned border village of Wadi Fukin, which served children from Husan and Nahhalin, were demolished. The Israelis, who encountered strong resistance, lost nine (some reports say ten) dead, several of them in a traffic accident after the battle, and thirty-nine wounded.[165]

During the attack, Hussein ordered his chief of staff to launch a 'full-scale counter-attack' against Israel. But Abu Nawar, according to UN sources, refused and eventually calmed the king down.[166]

Justifying the choice of objective, Israeli officials later noted that 'the inhabitants of Husan had taken part in the murder of the thirty five [Palmah soldiers sent to relieve the Etzion Bloc settlements in January 1948] and in the [subsequent] attack on the Nabi Daniyal [relief convoy to the Etzion Bloc]'. They had also taken part in the final attack on the Bloc, which ended in the massacre of dozens of its inhabitants in May 1948.[167]

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[163] 'Memorandum of Action Taken in Connection with the Ramat Rachel and Husan Incidents', Bums, undated, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-53; Dayan, *Avnei*, 229-30. The tractor driver was apparently killed in Israel and dragged across the river into Jordan.

[164] Dayan, *Diary of the Sinai Campaign*, 23-5; Ben-Gurion diary, entries for 24-5 Sept. 1956; Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 245-6; Dayan, *Avnei*, 230; 'Memorandum of Action Taken in Connection with the Ramat Rachel and Husan Incidents', Bums, undated, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-53.

[165] Dayan, *Diary of the Sinai Campaign*, 25-7; Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 26 Sept. 1956, BGA; Dayan, *Avnei*, 231; 'Memorandum of Action Taken in Connection with the Ramat Rachel and Husan Incidents', Bums, undated, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-53; US Dept., FM, to missions (Washington, etc.), 28 Sept. 1956, ISA FM 2949/4; Bar-On, *Sha`arei `Aza*, 246.

[166] 'Report of a Conversation with UN Observers', unsigned (probably by an FM official), undated (probably from late Sept. or early Oct. 1956), ISA FM 2949/4.

[167] Tekoah to missions (Washington, etc.), 26 Sept. 1956, ISA FM 2949/3.

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The Western powers, taking account of the Ramat Rachel Massacre, refrained from making representations to Israel. Even UNTSO observers, often critical of the results of IDF operations, this time expressed sympathy for the Israeli position; some even openly admired the 'precision' of recent IDF raids.[168]

Lawson, the US ambassador to Tel Aviv, was sceptical about the efficacy of IDF reprisals.[169] And, of course, he was right, in the sense that Husan, like ar Rahwa and the Gharandal before it, failed to stop the murderous infiltrations. A bare week after Husan, on 4 October, a band of bedouins (IDF intelligence said they were the ones who had killed Israelis in the `Arava in April, July, and August) murdered five Israelis in an ambush near Sodom, by the Dead Sea. The gang, which enjoyed the co-operation of local Jordanian commanders, stole the victims' weapons, though not their money or personal effects. Israel passed on to Jordan the names of some of the gang--but Amman did nothing.[170]

After momentarily weighing a raid on Sail, Israel held its fire, partly because preparations for the Sinai Campaign were in full swing and Ben-Gurion feared a last-minute British withdrawal from the Anglo-French-Israeli alliance against Egypt. It was better for Israel to appear now 'as accusers rather than as accused' on the international stage. On 7 October the Cabinet endorsed Ben-Gurion's decision for restraint.[171]

Qalqilya

But on 9 October infiltrators penetrated fourteen kilometres into the heart of the country and murdered two workers near Even-Yehuda, cutting off their victims' ears, apparently to take back as proof of 'success'. The IDF believed the Jordanian authorities had sent the killers.[172] Meeting in emergency session next day, the Cabinet approved Dayan's proposal for destroying a major target, the Qalqilya police fort, fifteen kilometres from Even-Yehuda.[173] The troops were instructed to avoid harming civilians.

The brigade-sized assault by paratroops with armour and artillery

[168] Capt. Yoel Ben-Dov, IJMAC, Dept. for Armistice Affairs, FM, etc., 8 Oct. 1956, ISA FM 2436/4; 'Report on a Conversation with UN Observers', ISA FM 2949/4; Avraham Kidron to ?, 19 Oct. 1956, ISA FM 2949/4; 'Reactions to the Husan Operation', FM memo., undated (but from late Sept. 1956), ISA FM 2949/4.

[169] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 1 Oct. 1956, BGA.

[170] FM to missions (London, etc.), 5 Oct. 1956, ISA 2440/3 bet; Tekoah to missions (New York, etc.), 11 Oct. 1956, ISA FM 2949/17. The Jordanians later claimed that the five persons named by Israel were already under arrest at the time of the Sodom attack (Lt. S. Levinson, IJMAC, to the head of the Israeli delegation, 16 Jan. 1957, ISA FM 2436/4 bet).

[171] Dayan, *Avnei*, 246; Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 230. Bar-On quotes at length from a Ben-Gurion letter to Dayan, from 6 Oct., explaining his opposition to a reprisal for Sodom.

[172] Dayan, *Avnei*, 246; Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 231.

[173] Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 10 Oct. 1956, BGA.

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support was led by Major Mordechai Gur, and went in at 21.30 hours on 10 October. In the two hours it took to take and clear the entire complex, eight Israeli troops were killed and twenty-nine wounded. The building was then blown up.

But a major secondary engagement developed between the IDF blocking force, positioned some ten kilometres to the east of Qalqilya, and an Arab Legion relief column from `Azzun. The paratroop brigade's reconnaissance company duly ambushed the nine-vehicle Legion column, but the Legionnaires, by now familiar with IDF tactics, dismounted, reorganized, attacked, and eventually surrounded the paratroops. IDF artillery kept the Legionnaires at bay, while two IDF relief columns set out eastwards towards the besieged company, about half of whom, by this time, had been killed or wounded. One column, manœuvring nine armoured half-tracks through QalqilYa`s alleys, reached the Qalqilya-`Azzun road and linked up with the besieged unit at 02.30. Four Israeli aircraft, two Mustangs and two Harvards, circled overhead throughout, threatening the Legionnaires with air attack.

The half-tracks, now also carrying the dead and the survivors of the blocking force, headed back towards Qalqilya, but ran into a reinforced Legion position at Khirbet Sufin, just east of Qalqilya. Another five paratroopers were killed and twenty wounded. Eight half-tracks managed to punch their way through to the demolished, Israeli-held fort. But one remained stuck in a ditch beside Khirbet Sufin, with two wounded paratroopers inside. An IDF column of four half-tracks went back in, found the two and brought them and the abandoned half-track back to Israeli lines. But two more Israeli soldiers were killed in the process.

In all, eighteen Israelis were killed and sixty-eight wounded in *Mivtza Shomron* (Operation Samaria), the most costly engagement for the IDF since 1951. The Jordanians suffered between seventy and ninety dead, policemen, National Guardsmen, and Legionnaires.[174]

Qalqilya left the paratroops and the IDF high command with a bitter taste in their mouths, and the heavy Israeli casualties made Ben-Gurion uneasy. He, Dayan, and Sharon left the summing-up meeting on 11 October 'with heavy hearts'. On 12 October the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee subjected Dayan to 'vigorous cross-examination'. On 14 October the IDF General Staff, and chiefly Dayan, were bitterly criticized by paratroop officers, and Dayan acknowledged some tactical errors.[175]

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[174] Dayan, *Diary of the Sinai Campaign*, 43-57; Bar-On *Etgar VeTigra*, 231-2.

[175] Dayan, *Diary of the Sinai Campaign*, 54-6. At one point in the battle, the hard-pressed IDF General Staff had contemplated a diversionary attack on Jordanian forces far to the north, in the Jenin area—to take the pressure off the beleaguered paratroops (Milstein, *HaTzanhanim*, 1. 429-30).

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But, beyond specific criticisms, Qalqilya triggered a wide acknowledgement in the General Staff that the retaliatory policy had reached the end of the road. Or, as Dayan put it, the consensus was that 'the present system need[ed] revision'.[176] 'The reprisal raids had proved ineffective in dealing with the problem of terrorism', wrote Yitzhak Rabin—OC Northern Command in 1956—in his memoirs.[177] The losses at Husan had been a painful warning; the losses at Qalqilya had been manifestly prohibitive. The IDF, wrote Dayan, had 'reached the end of the chapter of night reprisal actions'.[178]

World reactions to Qalqilya were generally 'restrained'. Whitehall refrained from publicly condemning the attack. The Israel Foreign Ministry noted that Western criticism had shifted from questioning Israel's fight to launch reprisals ('the right of self-defence') to questioning their effectiveness (echoing, as it were, the criticisms being voiced within the Israeli establishment).[179]

During the Qalqilya attack, Hussein and Jordan's CGS charged that Israel was using jet aircraft and asked Britain for air cover over Qalqilya. (The British had jet squadrons in Amman.) Arguing that Jordan had no jet aircraft, Amman said Britain must make up the deficiency in accordance with the Anglo-Jordanian defence pact. Hussein feared that Qalqilya was the prelude to 'a major Israeli attack'. 180 Duke saw Hussein's request as 'the best opportunity we have so far had for re-establishing our position in Jordan' since Glubb's ouster. Alternatively, failure to activate the RAF would put in question the continued British air presence in Jordan.[181]

But Britain declined either to activate its jets or to move more aircraft to Jordan, although, during the battle, Whitehall pointedly informed Israel of the request. The Foreign Office subsequently cautioned Israel against using British-bought jets or Centurion tanks against Jordan and threatened to activate the defence pact if Israel launched a full-scale war. Elath, Israel's ambassador in London, assured the Foreign Office that Israel had no intention of launching a war against Jordan and that Centurions would not be used against Jordan.[182] Britain passed on these assurances to

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[176] Dayan, *Diary of the Sinai Campaign*, 56.

[177] Y. Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs* (Tel Aviv, 1979), 40.

[178] Dayan, *Diary of the Sinai Campaign*, 57; Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 232-3.

[179] 'Summary of Reactions to Retaliatory Strikes: The Qalqilya Raid on 10/11 Oct.', D. Ben-Dov, Armistice Affairs Dept., and covering note, Tekoah to ?, 23 Oct. 1956, ISA FM 2949/4.

[180] Duke to FO (five cables—nos. 1446-50), 11 Oct. 1956, PRO PREM-11 1454; Dayan, *Diary of the Sinai Campaign*, 52-3.

[181] Duke to FO, 11 Oct. 1956, PRO PREM-11 1454.

[182] FO to British Embassy, Amman, 13 Oct. 1956, PRO PREM-11 1454; FO to British Embassy, Tel Aviv, 12 Oct. 1956, PRO PREM-11 1454; Dayan, *Diary of the Sinai Campaign*, 52.

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Jordan. Nevertheless, several squadrons of Cyprus-based Hunter jets were ordered to fly to Jordan in 'a demonstration of force' and resolve.[183]

At the same time, Whitehall bitingly noted that Jordan had dismissed Glubb (reducing the Legion's effectiveness) and expressed a wish to 'dispense with British assistance on land'. Consequently, 'Israel can at any moment destroy the Jordan army and occupy the country'. British air and sea intervention in the event of full-scale Israeli-Jordanian hostilities could not 'halt' the IDF. If Britain used air power against Israel, the likely upshot would be 'Israeli air attacks on [Britain's] airfields in Cyprus and Jordan' and the occupation of Jordan by the IDF. Jordan, the Foreign Office bluntly informed Duke (and Jordan), could not both downgrade the Legion and snub British military assistance on land and then seek decisive British intervention by air power alone. In short, Jordan should prefer 'a raid however heavy followed by an Israel withdrawal' to 'British intervention followed by war and occupation [by the IDF] of Jordan'.[184] Whitehall had thus 'avenged' the dismissal of Glubb and his fellow British officers.

British inaction during Qalqilya provoked strong anti-British and anti-Western feelings in Jordan. UN observers investigating the raid were pelted with stones in each Arab village they passed through and one Legionnaire tried to stab an observer with a bayonet. At another spot, a group of fifteen or twenty Legionnaires surrounded and threatened to kill an observer team; the observers said this was the first time that Jordanian soldiers—as distinct from West Bank civilians—had attacked or threatened them.[185]

There was something surrealistic about these Jordanian-British exchanges, for over the issue of possible British intervention hung the shadow of the impending Anglo-French-Israeli Sinai-Suez campaign against Egypt: Britain could hardly be expected to fight Israel in defence of Jordan while going to war against Egypt alongside Israel. But the secret nature of the Anglo-French-Israeli negotiations and alliance made it impossible for the Foreign Office to explain the position to Amman.

Indeed, in the light of the secret contacts with France and Israel, Eden was much perturbed by the tone of Britain's one-sidedly anti-Israeli reaction to Qalqilya at the United Nations, where a full-scale debate followed Jordan's complaint to the Security Council. Expressing 'concern . . . about the effect . . . on Israel', Eden asked the foreign secretary to 'moderate' the British representative's 'enthusiasm for Jordan'.[186]

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[183] FO to British Embassy, Amman, 12 Oct. 1956, PRO PREM-11 1454.

[184] FO to British Embassy, Amman, 14 Oct. 1956, PRO PREM-11 1454.

[185] Capt. Yoel Ben-Dov, IJMAC, to Armistice Affairs Dept., FM, etc., 15 Oct. 1956, ISA FM 2436/4.

[186] A[nthony] E[den] to foreign secretary, 20 Oct. 1956, PRO PREM-11 1454; draft minute to Eden, *c*.23 Oct. 1956, PRO FO 371-121746.

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But the Israeli leadership, guided by Ben-Gurion, remained suspicious of Britain during the run-up to the joint expedition against Nasser, fearful that Britain—uncertain of Jordan's long-term viability—might be interested in promoting an Iraqi take-over of Hussein's kingdom. The day after Husan, Jordan's foreign minister flew to Baghdad to try to finalize agreement on an Iraqi military deployment in Jordan. A warning light went on in Jerusalem, which had traditionally opposed the entry of Iraqi military forces into Jordan, and had often stated that such a move would be regarded as a *casus belli*. Golda Meir reiterated this position at the Saint Germain Conference, demanding that Britain, in the interest of the continued Anglo-French-Israeli alliance against Nasser, allow Israel freedom of action should Iraqi forces enter Jordan.[187]

Ben-Gurion ascribed the Jordan-Iraq plans to Britain, which 'does not believe in the existence of the state of Jordan'. (Ben-Gurion himself at this time doubted Jordan's viability: 'Jordan is an artificial state and has no future . . . Jordan must therefore be dissolved, the East Bank must be annexed by Iraq . . . and the West Bank must be organized as an autonomous Arab territory linked economically to Israel while Israel manages its defence and foreign policies.') If Israel was to go to war, alongside France and Britain, against Egypt, the British must make a commitment to rein in the other Arab states—Ben-Gurion meant Jordan and Iraq—and prevent them from attacking Israel.[188]

But on 4 October the Jordanian-Iraqi negotiations came up against opposition inside Jordan, where many Legion officers and most West Bank Palestinians feared an Iraqi take-over as did the Nasserists. On 5 October the talks were broken off.[189]

The Qalqilya raid reawakened both Jordan's interest in military reinforcement from Iraq and Israeli opposition to such a move. When the British *chargé d'affaires* in Tel Aviv, Peter Westlake, told Ben-Gurion on 12 October that Iraqi units would begin to deploy in Jordan's East Bank on 15 October and that Britain expected Israel not to interfere, Ben-Gurion responded that Israel 'reserved to herself her freedom of action'. That night Golda Meir declared that the prospective entry of Iraqi units into Jordan would be detrimental to the regional status quo and would be seen as a 'direct threat to Israel's territorial integrity'. Israel had no armistice agreement with Iraq and Israel would 'confront' this 'threat'. Ben-Gurion made a similar statement to the Knesset on 15 October: an Iraqi military presence anywhere in Jordan was unacceptable.[190]

The threat was enough. Iraqi troops massed along the Jordanian border stayed put. At the same time, Israel's declarations about the 'Iraqi threat'

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[187] Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 229.

[188] Ibid. 229, 253.

[189] Ibid. 230.

[190] Dayan, *Diary of the Sinai Campaign*, 52-4; Bar-On *Etgar VeTigra*, 233-4.

had a beneficial spin-off. They meshed with the overall Israeli effort, during the weeks preceding Sinai-Suez, to focus world attention on the Israeli-Jordanian border and on Israel's possible designs against Jordan, and away from the Israeli-Egyptian border, where the real blow was about to fall. Thus, talk of the 'Iraqi expeditionary force' served Israel's eve-of-Sinai strategic deception. Washington, for example, aware of the IDF mobilization, was, up to 29 October, principally worried about an Israeli attack against Jordan.

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Afterword: The Sinai-Suez War and the End of the Fedayeen

The Sinai-Suez War and its political aftermath fall outside the purview of this study. But the fate of the Fedayeen is a necessary epilogue to our story.

Not surprisingly, in launching the IDF blitz across Sinai on 29 October 1956, the Israeli government pointed to the Fedayeen as a main cause of the offensive. Indeed, the Cabinet in Jerusalem, explaining the pre-offensive mobilization, stated on 28 October that 'the renewal of the Fedayeen operations by the Egyptian leaders in recent weeks, from the borders of Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan' had necessitated the call-up.[1] The following day, hours after the IDF offensive had begun with the paratroop drop near the Mitle Pass in western Sinai, the Israeli Foreign Ministry declared that the objective of the offensive was 'to eliminate the Egyptian Fedayeen bases in the Sinai Peninsula'. The statement added that, during the previous week, Israel had suffered twenty-four casualties from mines 'planted by the Fedayeen in the Southern Negev' and that Fedayeen squads had been captured in Sdeh Boqer and Erez. IDF Radio announced, at 7 p.m. on 29 October, that Israeli forces had attacked 'Fedayeen units' at Ras al Naqb and Kuntilla.[2]

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[1] Bar-On, *Etgar VeTigra*, 287. The best, if brief, description of the IDF campaign in Sinai is Tehan, 'Ma`arechet Sinai'. The Sinai Campaign is necessarily described from the Israeli perspective, as the war, essentially, was one protracted Israeli offensive, with the Egyptian army figuring primarily as an 'object' of Israeli moves and Israeli-initiated developments. The Anglo-French military campaign in and around Port Said is described in Kyle, *Suez*, 382-476.

[2] Both the radio broadcast and the FM statement were deliberately misleading, on a number of counts. The units attacked at Ras al Naqb and Kuntilla were Egyptian army, not Fedayeen. The statement—in line with the 'Sevres scenario'—implied that the IDF attacks were limited reprisals, not part of an unfolding war. Lastly, there had been no Fedayeen attacks on Israel on 29 Oct. Indeed, something quite contrary had occurred. As a provocation, at IDF General Staff initiative, IDF troops blew up a well or water-pumping station inside Israel, near Kibbutz Nir-`Am, leaving a trail as if the attack had been carried out by saboteurs from Egypt. There may also have been a second, provocative raid by IDF troops into Egyptian territory that day (29 Oct.)—designed to draw Egyptian fire. The Israeli statements that a Fedayeen squad had been intercepted that day and captured near Kibbutz Erez, and that another Fedayeen squad had blown up the Nir-`Am well, were pure fabrications (interview with Mordechai Bar-On).

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The Last Fedayeen Offensive

The Sinai Campaign triggered a four-front Fedayeen offensive against Israel lasting through November and December 1956. It was to be the last before the rise of the Fatah—the main constitutent of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)—in the mid-1960s.

Egypt launched the new Fedayeen campaign two days after the paratroop drop just east of the Mitle Pass. Fedayeen attacks on Israel from the Gaza Strip and Lebanon began on the night of 31 October/1 November and from Jordan and Syria on 2 November. The simultaneity and intensity of the raids indicates a central 'launch' directive. Nasser may have ordered the Fedayeen into action to divert IDF attention and resources away from Sinai. But the later attacks, continuing for more than five weeks after the IDF conquest of Sinai and the Gaza Strip, were probably due to a desire for revenge and to demonstrate that Israel could not destroy Egypt's guerrilla-terrorist warfare capability. Perhaps there was also a 'diplomatic' purpose: to establish the Fedayeen issue as a bargaining chip in negotiatng Israel's withdrawal from Sinai.

Israeli officials and Western diplomants were in no doubt that the signal for the campaign had come from Nasser. The Egyptians seem both to have activated their independent, attaché-organized Fedayeen networks in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan and to have asked their governments to mount their own raids on Israel, thus demonstrating solidarity and relieving the pressure on Egypt.[3] US officials pressed Nasser to end the campaign.[4]

There was a spate of Fedayeen attacks along the Gaza border just before the IDF conquest of the Strip on 2-3 November 1956. The attacks bore the hallmark of central planning and co-ordination, but some may have been by Fedayeen escaping to Jordan. On 1 November Fedayeen killed two Israelis near Kibbutz Erez and blew up a railway bridge near Nitzanim, an electrical transformer, several water-pumping stations, and the water pipeline near Kibbutz Brur Hayil. They also attacked Moshav T'lamim and blew up a railway line near Kibbutz Giv`at Brenner. On 5 November five Israelis were killed when their vehicle hit a mine (which may have been planted two or three days before) at Sderot.[5]

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[3] Untitled 'Aide Memoire' submitted by Israel Embassy, London, to FO, dated 27 Dec. 1956, PRO FO 371-121804 VR1091/1055A; report to UN by Eban, 27 Dec. 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/12-3156, Box 2700; J. Nicholls (Tel Aviv) to FO, 13 Dec. 1956, PRO FO 371-121804 VR1091/1044.

[4] 'Memorandum of Conversation' (J. Lampton Berry (NEA), Abdur Rahman Khan (Pakistan minister in Washington), and J. Howison (DOA)), 23 Nov. 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/11-2356, Box 2697; Hoover (acting secretary of state) to US Embassy, Cairo, 23 Nov. 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/11-2458, Box 2697; Hoover to US Embassy, Cairo, 11 Dec. 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/12-1156, Box 2700).

[5] 'List of Fedayeen Attacks along Israel's Borders and in its Territory during 29.10.56-15.12.56', IDF Intelligence Branch, undated, ISA FM 2952/2.

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The first Fedayeen incident along the Lebanese border was on 31 October, when saboteurs blew up water pipes at Kibbutz Ma`ayan Baruch. Two days later, seven mines were discovered near Metulla. Mining attacks along the Lebanese border continued through November.[6]

The first attacks on the Syrian-Israel border took place on 2 November, with the mining of a road near Moshav Mishmar HaYarden. Fedayeen squads also laid mines near Taibe, in the Galilee, and south of Metulla. Some of these raids may have been by Syrian commandos. Attacks along the Jordanian border also began on 2 November when infiltrators fired on a bus in Wadi `Ara and blew up a Border Police jeep which rushed to the scene. On 4 November a squad of Fedayeen was discovered near Moshav Amatzia, south-west of Jerusalem; one was killed and four captured.

On 7-8 November Fedayeen struck simultaneously at a dozen or so targets along the Jordanian and Syrian borders. Two IDF soldiers were injured by a mine near Kibbutz Kfar HaNassi, just north of the Sea of Galilee; irrigation pipes were blown up near Kibbutz HaGoshrim close to the Syrian border, and a small bridge destroyed at nearby Metulla. On the Jordanian border, Fedayeen blew up water pipelines near Sha`ar HaGai in the Jerusalem Corridor and in Wadi `Ara; ambushed Israeli vehicles at Sha'ar HaGai (including Dayan's car), Wadi `Ara, Kibbutz Nahshon, Kibbutz Eyal near Qalqilya, and Kibbutz Ma `oz Haim in the Beit Shean Valley; and attacked Israeli civilians and houses in Lydda and in Moshav Beit `Arif. At Beit `Arif, where three houses were demolished, the saboteur or saboteurs left a note in an empty cigarette box: 'I am the man who blew up this house two years ago.' A number of Israelis were injured.

IDF Intelligence Branch believed that the 7-8 November attacks were launched by the Jordanian and Syrian authorities to prove that they 'had not left Nasser in the lurch alone'.[7]

Two Israelis were injured on 9 November when their jeep was ambushed near `Omer, south of the Hebron Hills. Other vehicles were ambushed near Taiyiba, in the Little Triangle, and near Kibbutz Beit Kama, in the northern Negev. Four soldiers were wounded when an IDF vehicle was mined and ambushed at Bir Ma`in, near Ramle. Water pipelines, small bridges, and houses were sabotaged in the northern Negev and in the centre of the country. Two guards were injured in a shoot-out with

[6] 'Report on Activities [of the Israel-Syria/Lebanon MAC]—November 1956', 29 Nov. 1956, ISA FM 2434/8.

[7] IDF Intelligence Branch pointed to Amman Radio and Radio Ramallah broadcasts on 7 and 8 Nov., reporting the raids in 'the occupied zone of Palestine', as corroboration of its view about official Syrian and Jordanian responsibility or complicity in the attacks ('List of Fedayeen Attacks along Israel's Borders and in its Territory during 29.10.56-15.12.56', ISA FM 2952/2; 'Fedayeen Activities in Israel', unsigned and undated monitoring reports, ISA FM 2952/2.

Fedayeen at Moshav Har-Tuv and a railway line was blown up, derailing a train some thirty kilometres north of Beersheba.[8]

Serious incidents in the North included the demolition on 10 November of a synagogue at Moshav Goren and on 12 November of a house at Kibbutz Manara, both on the Lebanese border. An IDF soldier was killed and three were injured when two vehicles hit mines at Kibbutz Gonen, on the Syrian border. IDF Intelligence believed these attacks were 'official' Syrian and Lebanese actions.[9]

Attacks along the Jordanian border, and, to a lesser extent, along the Syrian and Lebanese borders, continued with somewhat reduced intensity through the second half of November and December. Among the more serious on the Jordanian border were mining attacks on tractors at Kibbutz Beit HaShita, in the Jezreel Valley, on 30 November, and at Rehov, in the Beit Shean Valley, on 4 December, and the demolition of a house in Moshav Tel Mond, in which a man was killed and his wife and daughter injured, on 15 December. Withdrawing to Jordan, the Tel Mond terrorists threw grenades into a house in Kfar Hess (no one was hurt).[10] On the night of 23/4 December a Fedayeen squad from Jordan blew up the Histadrut Health Fund clinic at Yoqne' am, a settlement south-east of Haifa.[11]

While Israeli reports tended to attribute all the November-December attacks to 'Fedayeen', it is possible that at least some were the work of freelance saboteurs, possibly Nasserists, who decided independently to avenge the IDF offensive in Sinai. Some of the raids along the Syrian border may have been carried out by Syrian troops, apparently ordered to confine their attacks to Israeli army and police targets.[12]

There are various indications that the raiding across the Jordanian border up to mid-November had official Jordanian sponsorship or, at the very least, approval. On 15 November the Hebron Sports Club accorded a 'heroes' welcome' and reception, attended by several members of the Jordanian parliament, to returning Fedayeen. But Israeli intelligence and western diplomats monitored a switch in Jordanian policy on 15-16 November, when orders from Amman to Arab Legion units were picked up instructing the troops to put a stop to the raids. Israel believed Jordan may have panicked over future British support if it came to a fight with

[8] 'List of Fedayeen Activities along Israel's Borders and in its territory during 29.10.56-15.12.56', ISA FM 2952/2; Eban to president of Security Council, 13 Nov. 1956, PRO FO 371-121754 VR1074/691; M. Tuval to Information Dept., 13 Nov. 1956, ISA FM 2952/2.

[9] 'List of Fedayeen Activities along Israel's Borders and in its Territory during 29.10.56-15.12.56', ISA FM 2952/2.

[10] J. Nicholls (Tel Aviv) to FO, 17 Dec. 1956, PRO FO 371-121804 VR1091/1040; Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 16 Dec. 1956, BGA.

[11] Eban to UN secretary-general, 27 Dec. 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/12-3156, Box 2700.

[12] E. B. Lawson (Tel Aviv) to SecState, 19 Nov. 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/11-1856, Box 2697.

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Israel. Despite denials from London and Jerusalem, Amman understood that the attack on Egypt had been concerted.[13]

Syria continued its official sponsorship of the raids, but kept them low key, so that Israel, which had just demonstrated its military capabilities by thrashing the Egyptians, would not be too antagonized. Damascus believed it could rely on Soviet backing.[14]

The End of the Gaza Fedayeen

The Egyptian-Palestinian Fedayeen units, along with the rest of the Egyptian army, were shattered during the Israeli conquest of the Gaza Strip and Sinai. There had reportedly been some 300 Fedayeen in the Strip in May 1956, and the Egyptians had planned to increase their number to 500 within months.[15] During the last days of October and in early November some Fedayeen slipped away westwards, to Sinai, the Canal Zone, and Egypt proper, with the retreating Egyptian troops; some, it may be assumed, like thousands of Egyptian troops, died of thirst and hunger on the trek westwards. In the Gaza Strip, as the Israeli dragnet closed in, hundreds of others, together with regular soldiers of the Palestinian Brigade, took their chances by infiltrating eastwards, through Israel, to the relative safety of Jordan's West Bank.[16]

In the course of the Sinai Campaign the IDF had anticipated that some Fedayeen and Egyptian soldiers would try to reach the West Bank and might attack objectives in Israel on the way.[17] Through November and December, Egyptian-Palestinian ex-soldiers and Fedayeen filtered into Jordan, often guided through Israeli territory by Rafah bedouin. Some died in skirmishes with Israeli patrols and ambushes. By the end of the third week of November, some 1,200 Palestinian Brigade troops, including dozens of Fedayeen, had reached the West Bank, and had been disarmed by the Jordanian authorities.[18]

By mid-December Jordan reported that some 1,500 Egyptian-Palestinian

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[13] Israel Embassy, Washington DC, to US Dept., FM, 23 Nov. 1956, ISA FM 2952/2.

[14] Lawson to SecState, 19 Nov. 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/11-1856, Box 2697.

[15] W. E. Cole (Jerusalem) to SecState, 21 Nov. 1956, NA RG 59, Box 2697; Col. B. V. Leary (USMC) to A. Cordier (New York), 22 Nov. 1956, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-69.

[16] A US diplomatic dispatch from 6 Nov. 1956 reports the presence of Egyptian Fedayeen at the Hebron police station on 2 or 3 November and the passage of '25 to 30' Fedayeen through Jerusalem to Ramallah on 5 Nov. (Cole to SecState, 6 Nov. 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/11-656, Box 2696).

[17] A. Bina, Negev District, to the various areas and settlements, 5 Nov. 1956, Kibbutz Nahal-Oz Archive.

[18] W. L. Hamilton jun. (Tel Aviv) to State Dept., 'Impressions of a Visit to the Gaza Strip', 28 Nov. 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/11-2856, Box 2697; L. D. Mallory (Amman) to SecState, 20 Nov. 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/11-2056, Box 2697.

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soldiers and Fedayeen had reached the West Bank. They were housed under close watch in army and refugee camps, first near Hebron, then in Zarqa, and, lastly, in Ghur Nimrin. They were prevented from attacking Israel. All or most appear to have been returned to the Gaza Strip when it reverted to Egyptian rule, following the March 1957 IDF pull-out.[19]

But many Fedayeen and an estimated 4,000 Egyptian and Palestinian regulars were trapped in the Strip,[20] identified, and rounded up by the IDF, GSS, and police. Dozens of these Fedayeen appear to have been summarily executed, without trial. Some were probably killed during two massacres by IDF troops soon after the occupation of the Strip. On 3 November, the day Khan Yunis was conquered, IDF troops shot dead hundreds of Palestinian refugees and local inhabitants in the town. One UN report speaks of 'some 135 local residents' and '140 refugees' killed as IDF troops moved through the town and its refugee camp 'searching for people in possession of arms'.

In Rafah, which fell to the IDF on 1-2 November, Israeli troops killed between forty-eight and one hundred refugees and several local residents, and wounded another sixty-one during a massive screening operation on 12 November, in which they sought to identify former Egyptian and Palestinian soldiers and Fedayeen hiding among the local population ('48' or '49' was the official Israeli figure; '100' dead, a contemporary Palestinian estimate). IDF troops apparently opened fire in panic when a mass of Rafah residents rushed towards them (though no Israelis seem to have been killed or injured in the incident).[21]

Another sixty-six Palestinians, probably Fedayeen, were executed in a number of other incidents during screening operations in the Gaza Strip between 2 and 20 November. The Israeli authorities claimed that there had been resistance to the screening in a number of places. One US diplomat reported, in mid-November, that Israel had executed 'about 30' of 500 'soldiers and Fedayeen' captured in the Strip.[22]

The United Nations estimated that, all told, Israeli troops killed between 447 and 550 Arab civilians in the first three weeks of their occupation of the Strip. The estimate appears to have included civilians killed during the

[19] E. Johnston (Amman) to FO 19 Dec. 1956, PRO FO 371-121804 VR1091/1050; Plascov, *Refugees*, 88.

[20] Lawson to SecState, 19 Nov. 1956, NA RG 59, 684a.86/11-1656, Box 2696.

[21] The question of the massacre was raised in the Knesset by Communist MK Esther Wilenska and debated on 28 Nov. 1956. Ben-Gurion responded, giving a confused description of how the troops had killed '48' 'rioters' and wounded 'a number' (*Divrei HaKnesset*, 21/1 (28 Nov. 1956), 362-3).

[22] Lawson to SecState, 19 Nov. 1956, NA RG 59 Box 2696 684a.86/11-1656.

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actual conquest and may have included the Fedayeen killed during the battle for the Strip and those killed subsequently.[23]

[23] Unsigned and undated (but probably from late Nov. 1956) hand-written report by a senior UNRWA official—possibly the director of UNRWA—after a visit to the Gaza Strip, UNA DAG-1/2.1.4-69. The report was based on 'eye-witness accounts by refugees and personal observations by local as well as non-Arab [UNRWA] staff'. The numbers of dead and wounded were based on lists compiled by UNRWA officials and medical officers. Lt.-Col. R. F. Bayard, chairman of EIMAC, reported simply that 'a good number of persons have been shot down [by the Israelis] in cold blood for no apparent reason'. Bayard also reported 'many' cases of Israeli soldiers robbing Gaza Strip civilians of 'watches, rings, fountain pens, etc.' (Bayard to Col. Leary, acting UNTSO chief of staff, 13 Nov. 1956, UN Archive DAG-1/2.1.4-69). There is one enigmatic reference in Ben-Gurion's diary to captured Fedayeen: 'Fifteen Fedayeen have been identified. Among them are some still being held in the Gaza Strip. I suggested getting them out of there [*heitzati lehotzi otam misham*]' (Ben-Gurion Diary, entry for 17 Nov. 1956, BGA). Avraham Ahituv who directed GSS operations in the Gaza Strip during the Israeli occupation (November 1956-March 1957), declined to be interviewed on the matter.

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Conclusion

The Middle East was traumatically transformed in 1948. A Jewish state had emerged in the middle of the Muslim Arab world, and against that world's deepest wishes. The Arab states were humiliatingly defeated, and the people they had, at least in part, intervened to protect, the Palestinians, had been crushed, with some 700,000 driven into exile and another 150,000 left under Israeli rule. A dazed, disunited Arab world rubbed its eyes in appalled disbelief.

For a short while after 1948 there had been a window of opportunity for peace-making between Israel and Jordan; perhaps a settlement with Syria had also been possible. But the opportunities were missed. Ben-Gurion declined to meet the Jordanian and Syrian rulers when they sought to confer. Israel had been in no mood to make territorial or any other substantial concessions, and the Arab leaders with whom it secretly parleyed were too weak to make peace without receiving ample concessions. A dynamic of extremism took hold in the relations between the Arab states and within each state, whereby the more moderate and conciliatory were cowed, neutralized, and/or silenced—including through assassination—by the more radical and uncompromising. There is no knowing whether, had Israel pursued the negotiations with Jordan and Syria (and Egypt) with greater vigour and a more conciliatory spirit, peace treaties would have resulted or whether, if signed, they would not rapidly have unravelled.

What is certain is that the patterns of enmity that have characterized Israeli-Arab relations ever since crystallized and consolidated during those early post-1948 years. The Arabs regarded the burgeoning state of Israel as an alien Western growth, fated, like the Medieval Crusader kingdoms, to eventual defeat in battle, disintegration, and disappearance. The Arab states imposed a boycott and blockade on Israel, which included the closure of the Suez Canal and the Straits of Titan to Israeli shipping and Israeli-bound goods; unleashed a relentless political and propaganda campaign against the new state; and repeatedly threatened it with a final accounting in a 'Second Round' (all of which gave rise in Israel to a sense of siege and embattlement). But, seared in the crucible of 1948, the Arab states also recognized Israel's military superiority, and during the following years generally avoided even small-scale state-sponsored hostilities along the borders. They (tightly) feared that, given half a chance, Israel might conquer more Arab territory.

A strong expansionist current ran through both Zionist ideology and Israeli society. There was a general feeling, shared by such prominent

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figures as Dayan and Ben-Gurion, that the territorial gains of the 1948 war had fallen short of the envisioned promised land. *Bechiya LeDorot*—literally a cause for lamentation for future generations—was how Ben-Gurion described the failure to conquer Arab East Jerusalem; leading groups in Israel society regarded the Jordanian-controlled West Bank with the same feeling. And the Arabs were acutely aware of this undercurrent across the border.

That first Israeli-Arab war created problems that were to lead, against the wishes of most of the Arab leaders during most of 1949-56, to repeated low-key fighting along the new frontiers. One problem was border disputes, mostly involving the DMZs along the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Egyptian frontiers. There were major clashes in and around the DMZs with Syria in 1951 and 1955 and with Egypt in 1955.

But the main agency and cause of Israeli-Arab violence during 1949-56 was Arab infiltration into Israel, in large measure a direct consequence of the dispossession of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians—most of them refugees, some, border farmers—who understandably coveted lost houses, lands, crops, and movable goods on the other side of the line. The long, unnatural, sparsely inhabited, and poorly patrolled borders were easily crossed; abandoned Arab villages made for havens and way stations for enterprising marauders. Israel feared that the infiltration marked the start of a refugee return which would imperil the Jewish majority in the country. Many officials felt that, were Arab infiltrators, many of them shepherds and cultivators, allowed to push into Israel unimpeded, the borders might lose definition and that, ultimately, the state would lose precious tracts of land. In a sense, the country's territorial integrity, as defined in the armistice accords, was at stake, as was Israel's image as a firm, no-nonsense political entity, an important component of its deterrent posture. Infirmity would invite assault.

Israeli statistics (methodically prepared only from the period 1951-2) suggest that there were some 10,000-15,000 instances of infiltration annually, falling gradually to around 4,500 or more each year in 1955 and 1956. The decrease no doubt owed much to IDF operations and to increased sealing of the borders by Arab security forces, and, to some extent, to Israel's settlement of the border areas.

Most Israeli politicians came to regard the continual infiltration, which often resulted in theft and robbery, and, occasionally, in murder, as a type of undeclared 'guerrilla war' designed to weaken and perhaps even destroy Israel.[1] In the 1950s, and, indeed, for years thereafter, the Hebrew

[1] Ben-Gurion, for example, used the phrase 'guerrilla warfare' in this context after Qibya ('Statement by the Prime Minister of Israel, Mr David Ben-Gurion, in a Broadcast over the Israel State Radio, on Oct. 19, 1953, Dealing with the Recent Border Incidents', ISA FM 2453/5). On 2 Jan. 1956, Ben-Gurion told the Knesset:

(Footnote continued on next page)

word for infiltrator, *mistanen*, connoted, and was interchangeable with, 'terrorist'. But, though there were some terroristic and politically-motivated infiltrations, which increased over the early and mid-1950s, Israeli statistics and Arab evidence (such as reports by General Glubb) show that the vast bulk of the infiltration, 90 per cent and more, through 1949-56, was economically or socially motivated. Most of the infiltrators came to retrieve possessions and crops and, thereafter, to steal. A small proportion engaged in smuggling. More crossed the border to resettle in their former villages and towns or to visit relatives or just to look at their former homes and lands.

Apart from such 'civilian' infiltration, there was, throughout these years, a steady if small proportion of 'political' or terrorist infiltration—geared to sabotaging Israeli targets and killing and injuring Israelis. This infiltration was motivated by hatred and, in many cases, revenge—revenge for the national and personal wrongs and injuries inflicted during 1948 or during subsequent border incidents.

With the passage of years, there gradually developed a certain overlap between the 'economic' and 'political-terrorist' infiltrations. Economic infiltrators—faced by the IDF's free-fire policy—increasingly came armed and organized in gangs, and were quicker on the trigger. These gangs, while primarily bent on economic gain, sometimes killed Israeli security men or bystanders.

As Israeli counter-infiltration measures improved, so did the organization and sophistication of the infiltrators. Israeli intelligence identified a dozen or more infiltrator gangs operating in the Jerusalem Corridor, the coastal plain, the Jezreel Valley, and along the Gaza Strip border in the early and mid-1950s. Some specialized in stealing farm animals; others, irrigation pipes and motors. Some worked for merchants, who bought the stolen goods. Some economic gangs would carry out sabotage and the occasional murder on the side. A number of gangs, such as that run by the Mansi clan, formerly of Walaja, operating from Beit Jala, seem to have been chiefly 'political', and mainly interested in killing (and raping) Jews.

During the early and mid-1950s a number of Arab political organizations ran terrorist infiltrators into Israel. The ex-Mufti, Amin al Husayni, and

(Footnote continued from previous page)

> Our neighbours, the first of them being the Kingdom of Jordan . . . waged a guerrilla war [*milhemet-guerrilla*] against Israel's citizens. Bands of saboteurs and murderers would cross the border and attack . . . Israeli citizen[s]. . . . These incidents occurred already in the first years of the armistice agreements. They became more frequent especially from 1951 onwards. (quoted in D. Ben-Gurion, *Medinat Yisrael HaMehudeshet* (Tel Aviv, 1969), ii. 482).

See also Lavon's speech at the conference of Ihud HaKibbutzim VeHaKvutzot, 31 Oct. 1953 (NA RG 59, State Dept. Records, LM 59, Palestine and Israel, Internal Affairs, Roll 6, 784), in which he spoke of the on-going 'blockade and guerrilla warfare' as the preliminaries—in Arab eyes—to Israel's destruction.

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his followers in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, organized and financed occasional terrorist sorties into Israel, as did his distant cousin, Jamal Husayni. Muslim Brotherhood cells, both in the Gaza Strip and Jordan, also organized the occasional raid. But such raiding never amounted to much.

Not so the Fedayeen. In 1954-5 a new type of state-run guerrilla or terrorist infiltrator surfaced. Sporadically, beginning in spring 1954, the Egyptians launched terror or guerrilla raids into Israel. The raids were organized by the director of Egyptian military intelligence in the Gaza Strip, Major (later Colonel) Mustafa Hafez. The first concentrated wave of 'Fedayeen' raiding against Israel, in April 1954, was designed to avenge IDF attacks on Egyptian personnel.[2]

A small question mark hangs over the spate of Egyptian raids into Israel during July, August, and September 1954. Some appear to have been designed for intelligence-gathering, with the squads indulging in murder and sabotage on the side; one or two may have been designed only for the purpose of murder or sabotage. Whether they were authorized by the RCC or one of its members acting independently, or whether they were a local initiative of Hafez's or other Egyptian officers in the Strip, is unclear. All that can be said on the basis of the existing evidence is that these raids appear to have been a local initiative, stemming from the 'tit-for-tat' situation. There is no evidence to indicate that they were a result of a change of policy towards Israel in Cairo.

But there is no question about Egyptian policy towards Israel in 1955-6. Israel's raid on the Egyptian military camp in Gaza on 28 February 1955 clearly resulted in a major policy switch in Cairo. Following the raid, Egyptian soldiers and military intelligence agents unleashed a continuous revenge-oriented campaign of sabotage and murder along the Gaza Strip frontier, responsibility for which Egypt did not deny. Similarly, Egypt boasted about the Fedayeen raids of August-September 1955, designed to avenge IDF attacks on Egyptian positions. The raids were carried out by Hafez's Fedayeen battalion, established that spring on the basis of his original reconnaissance unit, reinforced by regular Egyptian army noncommissioned officers and National Guardsmen. At the same time, from mid-1955 onwards, Hafez's agents, who included the Egyptian military attachés in Amman and Damascus, recruited, organized, and funded local Fedayeen in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. The Fedayeen raiding from all

[2] Sharett interpreted the 8/9 April raids as an Egyptian reprisal for the Israeli raid on the night of 2/3 April, in which three Egyptian soldiers were killed and one (some reports say two) abducted by IDF squads (*Mivtza Sigariya 1* (Operation Cigarette 1)). The Israeli troops had gone into the Strip to abduct Egyptian hostages to exchange for an Israeli soldier abducted by Egyptian troops on 25 Mar. (Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, ii. 431, 446, entries for 4 and 9 Apr. 1954; and Sharrett at Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 13 Apr. 1954, CZA S100-92).

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four countries, apart from revenge, was designed to undermine the morale of Israel's border settlers and weaken Israel.

The state-sponsored raiding of 1955-6 has created, over time, something of an optical (or chronological) illusion. The traditional Israeli view is that, from 1949 until 1956, infiltration was all or generally state-organized and inspired, and terrorist in intent. The reality was different and far more complex. Existing documentation overwhelmingly demonstrates that, through most of the period, the Arab governments and armies opposed infiltration into Israel and attacks by infiltrators against Israel, primarily because they feared IDF reprisals. Syria, apart from the struggle over the DMZ, opposed and almost completely prevented infiltration. The Lebanese were somewhat less successful, but none the less managed substantially to curb infiltration along their southern border, partly by moving refugees who had initially come to rest in the south and resettling them further north.

Jordan between 1949 and March 1956 made strenuous efforts to curb infiltration; it jailed many hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of infiltrators over the years. But the length of the frontier, the nature of the terrain, the small size of the Arab Legion, and popular sympathy for the infiltrators helped frustrate the central government's efforts. Local West Bank officials and National Guardsmen often co-operated with infiltrators. Israel's leaders usually ignored or denied the thrust of the Jordanian government's anti-infiltration policy.

Towards the end of our period, Jordanian attitudes changed. The 'Arabization' of the Arab Legion high command in March 1956 and the winds of Nasserist radicalism (and subversion) somewhat undermined Amman's traditional anti-infiltration policy. Certainly the Legion helped recruit and organize Jordanian Fedayeen units and extended help and hospitality to Gaza-based Fedayeen who reached the West Bank during and after April 1956. Terrorist infiltration from Jordan against Israel markedly increased in summer and autumn 1956, and some Legion commanders appear to have been involved.

The Egyptian civil and military authorities tried to halt civilian infiltration both during 1949-54 and during 1955-6. Initially, they sought quiet along the border and with Israel; during the later period, while occasionally interested in bouts of hostilities, they wanted to maintain control over the timing, duration, and location of attacks. Uncontrolled civilian infiltrators were a troublesome nuisance. During much of 1949-56 Israeli and Egyptian authorities both viewed the Muslim Brotherhood, Amin al Husayni, and some marauding Sinai/Negev bedouin tribesmen as enemies. But until early 1955 Cairo was not particularly interested in what happened along the Gaza and Sinai-Negev borders and, in any case, its

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efforts to halt infiltration were hampered and neutralized by local officials, policemen, and soldiers who sympathized with the infiltrators.

While Israeli spokesmen often exaggerated the harm the infiltrators did to Israel, there is no doubt that it was considerable. Between 1949 and 1956 infiltrators killed some 200, and perhaps as many as 250, Israelis. (A similar number of Israeli soldiers were killed in this period by Arab soldiers, either in border clashes or in IDF raids, many of which were triggered by infiltrator attacks). Another 500, and perhaps as many as 1,000, Israelis were injured by infiltrators.

The country, and the border settlers in particular, many of them new immigrants from Muslim countries, suffered persistently and often grievously from the infiltrators. For months on end, border settlers lived in fear, shut in their homes after dusk, a constant prey to theft and sabotage. Most of the settlers held on, many because they had nowhere else to go. But hundreds of families gave up and fled to the centre of the country, abandoning homes, relatives, and fields. Perhaps half a dozen settlements emptied completely, mainly because of fear of infiltrators and their depredations. Many others were partially abandoned. Infiltration also deterred new immigrants from settling border areas. During the early 1950s Israel's leaders recurrently feared that infiltration would subvert the whole settlement venture along the borders, important to the country for strategic, economic, and demographic reasons.

Apart from physical and psychological harm, property worth hundreds of thousands of US dollars was stolen or destroyed by infiltrators each year. Some settlers sold their cows off so that they would not fall into the hands of the marauders, others left distant fields uncultivated for fear of attack and sabotage. Crops and water were lost as irrigation equipment was stolen and sabotaged. Infiltration to some degree curtailed the economic development of the border areas.

The material cost of infiltration was not just a matter of theft or damage. There were also large indirect expenses. By 1956 the country was spending perhaps a million US dollars annually on guards in border settlements. The IDF and police expended further large sums on patrols and ambushes. Vast sums were spent on perimeter fencing and lighting.

In the course of 1949-56 Israel devised and adopted an anti-infiltration policy that consisted of both passive and active measures. Some of the measures, such as the establishment of new settlements along the borders and in the empty interior of the country, the destruction of the abandoned Arab villages, and the nudging back of the borders, also had demographic, economic, geographical, and political causes.

But many measures were specifically geared to combating infiltration.

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The IDF was the main agency of anti-infiltration operations. The army and police patrolled the borders, and set ambushes, mines, and booby-traps. In addition, a corps of civilian guards and security officers (*muhzakim* and *ma''azim*) was organized and deployed to protect the settlements.

Through most of the period, there was a 'free-fire' policy towards infiltrators along the border and just behind the Israeli lines. Soldiers, policemen, and security guards, especially at night, fired at anything that moved. Mines planted in or near fields and irrigation systems and around settlements killed dozens of infiltrators each year. Sometimes kibbutz guards booby-trapped the bodies of infiltrators so that those who came to retrieve them the following night would also be blown up. Occasionally, the 'free-fire' policy was limited by IDF General Staff directives and the LCAs. But there were always loopholes, of which the most useful was the permission to fire on infiltrators who declined to obey a command to stop, and ran away. But what actually happened was left very much to the discretion of local commanders and soldiers. As far as I have been able to verify, no Israeli soldier, policeman, or civilian was ever tried for shooting and killing an unarmed Arab infiltrator while the infiltrator was crossing the border. Moreover, in the early years, the IDF took relatively few infiltrators prisoner. Those wounded by patrols or ambushes were often killed off on the spot. Again, as far as I know, no Israeli soldier, policeman, or civilian was ever tried for such behaviour.

In 1955-6 the 'free-fire' policy appears to have been abandoned (though not, of course, during night ambushes). The IDF and police then took far more infiltrators prisoner and the number of those killed substantially declined.

The 'free fire' policy prompted more and more infiltrators to cross the line armed. As a result, more and more Israelis died in shoot-outs with infiltrators. In turn, IDF troops and settlement guards became quicker on the trigger.

The available documentation suggests that Israeli security forces and civilian guards, and their mines and booby-traps, killed somewhere between 2,700 and 5,000 Arab infiltrators during 1949-56. The evidence suggests that the vast majority of those killed were unarmed; the overwhelming majority had infiltrated for economic or social reasons. The majority of the infiltrators killed died during 1949-51; there was a drop to some 300-500 a year in 1952-4. Available statistics indicate a further drop in fatalities during 1955-6, despite the relative increase in terrorist infiltration.

The 'free-fire' policy, itself morally problematic, resulted in a series of atrocities. For some Israeli troops, it was only a small step from the (permitted) 'free-fire' norms to the (un-permitted) rape and murder of captured infiltrators, the shooting of Arabs in no man's land or on the

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Arab side of the border, or the dispatch of a hundred captured infiltrators through the desert without water under the summer sun. The documents describe more than a dozen such atrocities, involving dozens of Arab dead. There is no hint in the documentation of higher-echelon inspiration or instruction for the atrocities. But it is unclear whether the perpetrators were punished and, if so, how. Most of the atrocities documented occurred in 1949-51. Available documents do not record any atrocities against infiltrators after 1953. This was probably due, at least in part, to the increase in IDF discipline; in part, perhaps, to the increased police role in combating infiltration. But the Kafr Qasim massacre of October 1956,[3]

[3] The Kafr Qasim massacre was the biggest massacre of Arabs by Israeli troops since the 1948 war. The massacre was not part of the IDF offensive in Sinai but can be said to have been part and parcel of that war, in a number of senses. The following description is based on M. Kordov, *11 Kumtot Yerukot BaDin* (Tel Aviv, 1959), and Elam, *Memal'ei HaPekudot*, 53-70.

Just after 5 p.m. on 29 Oct. 1956, a few minutes after the paratroops had landed at the Parker Memorial, Israeli Border Policemen, under IDF command, slaughtered forty-seven Arabs—fifteen of them women and eleven children aged 8 to 15—on the outskirts of the Israeli Arab village of Kafr Qasim, a kilometre from the Jordanian border. Another thirteen villagers were wounded. Two more Israeli Arabs were shot dead that day, one at At Taiyiba and the other at At Tira, two villages to the north. All the victims had been on their way home from fields and factories when they were stopped by Border Police roadblocks and patrols, lined up, and shot. With hostilities with Egypt just launched, and afraid of possible Jordanian entry into the war, the IDF had imposed a 5 p.m.-to-dawn curfew on the Arab 'Little Triangle' border villages. Until then, the regular Military Government curfew in the Arab border villages ran from 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. The Border Police announced the new curfew hours inside the villages only minutes before 5 p.m. on 29 Oct.—and villagers working outside Kafr Qasim, in the fields or factories, were simply not informed. The villagers returning that afternoon to their homes knew nothing about the new curfew time. The Border Police in Kafr Qasim were ordered by their battalion OC 'to shoot to kill' all curfew violators—which they duly did. (In other sections of the border, more reasonably, IDF troops and Border Police allowed almost all the unknowing curfew violators to pass through the roadblocks to their homes).

Despite the ongoing war and despite his past proclivity to ignore IDF brutality and atrocities, Ben-Gurion on 1 Nov. ordered an internal enquiry. Ben-Gurion may have realized that an unprovoked massacre of such dimensions could not be hushed up. Censorship kept the affair out of the newspapers, but a group of Israeli intellectuals and a Communist Party MK, Tewfiq Toubi, both privately publicized the incident. On 12 Nov. Ben-Gurion addressed the Knesset, condemning the massacre as a 'dreadful atrocity'. Eventually, I£5,000 was paid out by the state for each of the fatalities and those responsible were court-martialled. Eleven Border Police, including the battalion commander responsible, Major Shmuel Melniki, were sentenced to lengthy prison terms. The responsible brigade OC, Issachar Shadmi, was convicted of a minor administrative offence and sentenced to pay a fine of one *agora* (100 *agorot* in I£1). All the convicted Border Police were out of jail by Nov. 1959, having received presidential pardons or administrative reductions of sentence. During the trial, Major Melniki explained: 'The order [to shoot to kill Arab curfew-breakers] was not of a kind that did not conform to the spirit of the times' (quoted in Elam, *Memal'ei HaPekudot*, 61). The Border Police, whose bread and butter was chasing, apprehending, and killing Arab infiltrators, saw 'every Arab as an enemy of Israel' (Kordov, *Kumtot*, 33). Elam summarized the episode thus: 'In the Israeli consciousness [the Israeli Arabs] were seen as superfluous people' (*Memal'ei HePekudot*, 67). The Israeli Arabs were seen as a potential Fifth Column and plans had been drawn up for the expulsion of the border communities along the West Bank in the event of war with Jordan (R. Rosenthal, 'Mivtza Hafarferet', *Hadashot*, 25 Oct. 1991).

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carried out by Border Police under IDF command, no doubt had its roots in prevalent attitudes and behaviour towards infiltrators in previous years.

The 'free-fire' policy and the atrocities alienated Arab officials and increased antagonism towards Israel among them and the West Bank and Gaza populations, fuelling belligerence and acts of vengeance.

While Israel's main defensive effort to abort infiltrations took place along the borders, periodic search operations were mounted in the interior in Israeli Arab villages to weed out infiltrators. Some round-ups were brutal, occasionally involving beatings and worse. Most of the infiltrators rounded up were seeking to resettle or were visiting family. Most were expelled after days, weeks, or months in detention. During much of the period, Israeli policy was to expel infiltrators across borders other than those from which they had arrived, to make their lives more difficult. Occasionally, expulsions were brutal, even barbaric, as in the case of the 'Arava expulsion of summer 1950, in which dozens died of dehydration and hunger. The expulsions often involved sundering apart for a second time family members who had originally been separated in 1948.

But it was Israel's main offensive anti-infiltration measure, the retaliatory strike, that was to reverberate most loudly down Middle Eastern history. The reprisal raids violated the territorial integrity of the Arab states and highlighted the vulnerability of their citizens, vehicles, villages, and, later, troops. Here, rather than dealing with individual infiltrators, Israel confronted and challenged the Jordanian and Egyptian governments and armed forces. From some point in 1953, the cycle of infiltration and reprisal boded war, something that certain Israeli leaders (from 1954) either actively sought or were not averse to.

But, even short of such a war, the raids had a persistent, negative effect on the relations between Israel and its neighbours.[4] This continually troubled Sharett, but Ben-Gurion and Dayan, to judge from the available evidence, were little bothered.

Ben-Gurion's attitude to peace-making with Jordan's King `Abdullah and Syria's President Za`im in 1949-51 was consistent with his indifference to the possible effects of Israeli policies along the border on the chance of

[4] Tal ('HaTguvot', 121) argues that only in 1954, 'a watershed year', did events along the borders begin to affect 'the wider framework of mutual [Israeli-Arab] relations', as if to say that the cycle of infiltrator-IDF violence in the preceding years had somehow failed to touch on the basic issues, interests, and policies of the countries involved. The available evidence indicates otherwise. There can be little doubt that the violence affected Israeli and Arab perceptions and policies regarding war and peace with each other, from 1949 onwards. The effort by some Israeli scholars to separate daily violence along the borders (*bitahon shotef* or current security) from the 'big' strategic picture (sometimes called *bitahon besisi* or basic security) is, to my mind, artificial. As clashes with infiltrators and Arab troops along the border fed strategic perceptions and thinking, so strategic perceptions and thinking at least in part underlay (Israeli) border policies and activities.

peace with the Arab states throughout 1949-56. Neither he nor Dayan appears to have believed in the possibility of peace with the Arab states, at least not on terms acceptable to Israel, i.e. no territorial concessions. And, just as terrorist infiltrator raids and other manifestations of Arab hostility 'proved' for many Israelis that no peace was possible, so the IDF's shoot-to-kill policy and retaliatory strikes 'proved' for the Arabs that no peace was possible with the alien, bellicose Jewish state.

Above all, the retaliatory raids were a matter of retribution and deterrence. But they also raised Israeli morale, helped forge the heterogeneous immigrant society into a united nation, probably helped Mapai retain power and beat back the more militant, or vociferous, Right, and certainly readied the IDF for the coming 'Second Round'.

The retaliatory policy was a natural offspring of pre-1948 Yishuv-Arab relations. A pattern of Arab terrorist attack and Yishuv reprisal had been set in the 1930s and 1940s; it was continued after the establishment of the state. The post-1948 retaliatory policy appears to have been adopted without serious analysis or debate at, say, Cabinet level. Led and guided by Ben-Gurion, the defence establishment was given its head. What had been true and instinctively understood before 1948, that Arabs regarded restraint as a sign of weakness and understood only the language of force,[5] was held to be true afterwards as well; what had been true of individual Arabs and Arab communities was true also of the Arab states.

The retaliatory policy underwent a process of trial and error. Aerial strafing and (relatively) long-range mortar bombardment were tried early on and abandoned fairly quickly (though Dayan's shelling of Gaza City in April 1956 was a reversion to this second method). By 1950-1 the preferred method was the small-unit cross-border infantry raid, involving ambushes, or attacks on village houses.

Between 1949 and 1951 the reprisals aimed to strike at the perpetrators of attacks, to punish the guilty. But all too often the offenders would not be identified or reached. So the IDF changed tack. A new strategy, of hitting the offenders' village or district, was adopted, with the aim of both frightening the locals into reining in the infiltrators and forcing the relevant Arab government to curb infiltration. This involved knowingly killing innocent civilians. Partly for this reason, perhaps, Israel usually dissociated itself from the raids, placing the blame on angry border settlers and vigilantes.

But such collective punishment, meted out in 1952-3, also proved largely unsuccessful. Infiltration, including terrorist infiltration, increased.

[5] To my mind, the best joke to have emerged from Israel's bitter experience in Lebanon in 1982-5 was: 'The only language the Lebanese don't understand is force.'

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Usually, after each raid, only a brief and very local lull ensued. The raids induced the Arabs to step up border controls, but the troops were too few, the frontiers too long and difficult, and the will to curb infiltration was often lacking: 'Why should Arabs kill or arrest other Arabs to protect Jews?' Arab officials argued.

The strategy died at Qibya, in October 1953, along with the dozens slaughtered in the raid by Unit 101 and the paratroops. The cry that went up in Jordan, and was echoed in London and Washington and at the United Nations, persuaded Israel's leaders that the political cost of such collective, indiscriminate punishment of civilians was too great.

Within weeks, a variant was adopted. While still pursuing the same aims, the IDF changed its targets. Arab Legion camps, National Guard outposts, Jordanian police stations, and Egyptian military positions became the favoured objectives. The hope was that there would be fewer, if any, civilian casualities and, hence, less negative political fall-out, and that the Arab states would be even less able to countenance IDF raids against their military and police than against rural civilians and that they would, therefore, take even more effective measures to curb infiltration. The new strategy, which necessitated far larger raiding forces (battalions and brigades rather than squads, platoons, and companies), also usually called for official admission of responsibility.

The change in retaliatory policy also marked a radical shift in IDF 'purity of arms' (*Tohar HaNeshek*) praxis. A large proportion of Arab casualities before the change were women and children. Thereafter, most operational orders specifically prohibited harming women and children, and, in fact, few civilians were killed or wounded. The policy shift thus brought into relative alignment Israel's (and, particularly, Ben-Gurion's) public utterances about war ethics and 'fighting clean', and IDF practice.

While the new tactics were somewhat more effective than the previous method, they, too, did not bring a tranquillity to the border areas. True, Jordan and (to a lesser extent) Egypt deployed more troops along the line. But infiltration was only reduced, not eliminated, and friction between Arab and Israeli troops increased substantially, as did Israeli military casualties.

The new-style IDF raids had other major repercussions. They prompted Arab (mainly Egyptian) counter-strikes, in the form of cross-border ambushes and mining by regular troops and the activation of the Fedayeen, who struck deep inside Israel. The large IDF raids also precipitated massive Egyptian (and smaller-scale Syrian) rearmament and spurred Arab attempts at unity or alignment.

In sum, the retaliatory policy was both a failure and a success. Through its various mutations, it failed to solve the infiltration problem, neither punishing terrorist infiltrators nor curbing terrorist infiltration, and failed to stymie infiltration in general. And, far from compelling the Arab states

to stop infiltration along their borders, it generated state-organized infiltration, more deadly than anything before it.

But there were temporary, local successes, and between 1949 and 1956 there was a general reduction in the incidence of infiltration. But this may have been due more to Israeli defensive measures and to gradual Arab acquiescence in the post-1948 lines than to the reprisals and the increase in Arab military patrolling that the reprisals engendered. The retaliatory policy's advocates argued that, had there been no reprisals (and no shoot-to-kill border policy), infiltration would have grown worse. Perhaps; but the retaliatory policy was matched by a clear increase in terrorist infiltration, some of it geared to avenging the casualties sustained in the reprisals. And IDF casualties also grew substantially between 1949 and 1956.

By autumn 1956 the IDF high command reached the conclusion that the retaliatory policy was unsustainable. The big raids were too costly; the IDF could not take such losses, especially among its élite units.

But, just as the retaliatory policy reached a dead end, so another process, the Israeli-French-British alignment for war against Egypt, ripened. The retaliatory policy was a major factor in both the regional drift to war and the conditioning of the Israeli public and the IDF for war. And, as it turned out, the Sinai war, in a sense the ultimate and largest retaliatory strike, resolved the problem of terrorist infiltration that the retaliatory policy had set out to solve and also the problems that the retaliatory policy had given rise to along the way, the Fedayeen, and Arab rearmament, and its concomitant strategic threat. Thus, by a somewhat circuitous route, the policy had resulted in ending the terrorist infiltration and had helped trap Egypt into a war in which the strategic threat to Israel was demolished. The Sinai-Suez War of October-November 1956 bought Israel a decade of relative tranquillity along the borders, during which it developed and prospered, and prepared its army for 1967.

In the wider context of Israeli—world and Israeli—Arab relations, the retaliatory policy without doubt had detrimental effects. As Gideon Rafael put it in 1955:

> Israeli conflict with the UN apparatus, the decline of Israeli prestige in world public opinion as a result of the Qibya operation, lack of support for Israeli positions in the Security Council, [all] caused grave harm to the state's international position and to the feeling of security of its citizens. Moreover, Israel's failures in the international arena and its firm action against neighbouring Arab states increased the hatred and the incitement [against Israel] among the Arabs and encouraged them to [hope] for revenge.[6]

[6] 'Report on the Operations, Plans and Chances of Action of the Bureau of the [Official] Responsible for Middle East Affairs and Political Matters at the UN'. G. Rafael to foreign minister, 14 June 1955, ISA FM 2446/1.

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But, ultimately, the reprisals failed fatally to dent Israeli—Western relations. Israel emerged from 1949-56 with its relations with the West more or less intact. Ben-Gurion's well-developed political-historical antennae successfully gauged the limits of international tolerance, and he always stopped short of the red line. Israel also benefited from circumstance; its interests were promoted by such developments as the deterioration of East-West relations and of Anglo-Egyptian and Franco-Egyptian relations. By the end of the era of reprisals, Israel was firmly allied with France and Britain. Indeed, the IDF's convincing performance in the reprisals of 1954-6 probably helped persuade France of Israel's military worth and, thus, facilitated the formation of the tripartite alliance. And, while the Anglo-Israeli bond held for only a very short time, the Franco-Israeli relationship flourished down to 1967.

But on the level of Israeli-Arab relations, the retaliatory policy had clear and lasting detrimental effects: it increased popular antagonism and hatred towards Israel in the neighbouring states. Each raid, as Sharett put it in 1956, 'ignites afresh a sea of hatred'.[7]

How much this contributed to each Arab government's hostility towards Israel and how much each Israeli action—say, the Sharafat reprisal or the `Arava expulsion—contributed to the abortion of a specific peace negotiation is difficult to assess. The picture will probably become much clearer when the Arab states' archives are opened. For the moment one may say that, at various junctures, there is evidence that Israeli actions alienated Arab public opinion and Arab leaders such as `Abdullah, Rifa`i, and Nasser, and persuaded them of the difficulty, if not impossibility, of negotiating peace with Israel. Certainly these leaders had to take account of public feeling, especially among their military and political élites. It was to this that Sharett was referring when he spoke of the 'harm [*shamot*] we do, with our own hands . . . to every chance of preparing the ground for peace'.[8]

A proud Arab like `Abdullah could not but take offence at Israel's behaviour along the borders. As the king probably understood it, Israel's message was that Arab life was cheap and that all-powerful Israel was unafraid, indeed, contemptuous, of Arab reaction. In December 1950 he told the American minister in Amman that he was 'at [the] end of [his] patience with Israelis'. Each time he had been close to a settlement, he said, the 'Israelis have spoiled everything by some act of aggression such as [the] Wadi Araba incident of last May'.[9] Immediately after that expulsion, `Abdullah and Israel had resumed the secret peace negotiations which had been broken off in April, but he had been hamstrung by

[7] Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, v. 1519, entry for 28 June 1956.

[8] Ibid. iv. 1081, entry for 5 July 1955.

[9] G. A. Drew (Amman) to SecState, 5 Dec. 1950, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 1.

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Jordanian public, parliamentary, and Cabinet opinion, which was against a separate peace with Israel,[10] a cast of mind which reports of the expulsion had probably helped mould or, at least, reinforced.

Jordan was similarly affected half a year later, when IDF troops, on 2 November 1950, murdered two Arab children, and wounded a third, at Deir Aiyub, near Latrun. The British Minister in Amman, Kirkbride, reported that the incident had hardened 'feelings against having anything to do with the Israelis'.[11] The IDF raid on Sharafat, on the night of 6/7 February 1951, had a similarly negative effect on the last stage of the secret negotiations before `Abdullah's death. `Abdullah said he 'felt he had reached [the] end of his conciliatory attitude toward [the] Israelis which had been completely unproductive'. Jordan's new prime minister, Samir Rifa`i, previously regarded as reasonable and conciliatory towards Israel, described his hopes for peace as 'rudely shattered'; Israel 'did not seriously desire peace', he said,[12] and was extremely unconciliatory during the secret talks in Feburary-April 1951.[13]

The psychological impact of Israeli reprisals on the Arab states and peoples, a factor barely considered by Ben-Gurion (though well understood by Dayan), cannot be ignored. For Jordanians and Egyptians, the raids were a persistent provocation and humiliation, challenging the Arab authorities to act while highlighting their impotence to do so. Israel's treatment of the infiltrators had a similar effect, humiliating the Arab political and military leaders in the eyes of their counterparts in the other states and in the eyes of their own publics. And, as Sharett understood, people do not make peace with those who humiliate them; instead, they nurse their grievances and nurture vengefulness.

But the retaliatory strikes also probably inhibited Arab readiness to express this hostility. As Dayan understood, and occasionally argued, the continual and successful IDF blows against the Arab armies had a deterrent effect on the governments concerned and prevented them from embarking on a 'Second Round'. It is likely that the raids on Syria in

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[10] Shlaim, *Collusion*, 564-7.

[11] A. S. Kirkbride to FO, 1 Dec. 1950, PRO FO 371-82703 ET1013/12.

[12] A.D. Fritzlan (Amman) to State Dept., 8 Feb. 1951, NA RG 84, Tel Aviv Embassy, Classified General Records, 1950-2, 321.9; Fritzlan to SecState, 9 Feb. 1951, NA RG 59, LM 60, Roll 1.

[13] Shlaim, *Collusion*, 591-2. One may argue that the Arab leaders were not genuinely offended by Israel's actions along the borders but merely exploited them, in talks with Western diplomats, to justify their own innate or specific 'rejectionism' *vis-à-vis* Israel and peace. Only the opening of Arab state archives can help resolve this question. I am inclined to believe that, while some Arab leaders, at certain junctures, used Israeli actions to justify the 'rejectionist' course they had already decided upon, the succession of Israeli actions along the borders during 1949-51 significantly contributed to the failure of the secret Israeli-Jordanian peace talks.

December 1955 and Jordan in September—October 1956 helped persuade these countries' leaders to stay out of the 1956 war. But, by the same token, from February 1955 the raids also propelled first Egypt, and then Syria, to seek massive Soviet arms shipments, unleashing the arms race that was a major factor in the outbreak of the Sinai—Suez War. In this sense, the retaliatory policy had led more or less directly to war.

But it also has to be said that the retaliatory policy's opposite, 'restraint', to the extent that it was practised by Sharett in his period at the helm, also failed. It did not lead to a reduction of infiltration or Israeli casualties from infiltration; it produced no major increase in Western aid or arms sales to Israel, and no Western security guarantees or pacts; and it did not lead to serious Israeli—Arab peace negotiations.

Western governments, Arab leaders, and a handful of Israelis criticized each stage of the retaliatory policy, especially from 1953 onwards, as ineffective, counter-productive, or downright damaging to Israel's interests. But once embarked on the path of retaliation, Israel's political and military leaders (save for Sharett and his sometime colleagues) never looked back. In part, this was due to inertia, in part to there being no obvious alternative; then, too, retaliation yielded major peripheral benefits such as the improvement of IDF capabilities; and, also, both Israeli commanders and politicians deemed it at least partially successful.

Ben-Gurion, that virtuoso manipulator of facts, gave the army a relatively free hand. From 1949, cross-border IDF patrols were common enough. In some units, deep penetration patrols were passing-out exercises, capping months of training. Large cross-border operations required Ben-Gurion's approval and from 1949 until summer 1953 he determined the retaliatory policy more or less alone. Sometimes he informed Sharett in advance of 'serious' military actions; more often, he did not. Occasionally, Sharett objected. In some cases, the matter was brought to the full Cabinet for decision, but usually the Cabinet was left out of the decision-making process.

Ben-Gurion, tired after decades at the helm of the Zionist movement and the new state, gradually withdrew from the government during the summer and autumn of 1953. In Sharett's year or so as prime minister there were fewer IDF raids. Ben-Gurion's return to the Cabinet in February 1955 signalled a major upgrading in the size if not the frequency of the raids, culminating in the massive raids against Egypt and Syria (October-December 1955) and Jordan (September-October 1956) that preceded the Sinai Campaign.

From the viewpoint of the historian of Israeli policy and decision-making, Sharett's premiership was the most interesting period during

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1949-56. The years 1949-53 and 1955-6 were periods of autocratic rule, albeit within a democratic, coalition framework. The Sharett months were characterized by vigorous debate, divided counsels, fluctuations, and hesitancy. But, even under Sharett, the Activist policy was implemented; most of Unit 101's operations took place when Sharett was acting prime minister.

Ben-Gurion, when he withdrew from government at the end of 1953, handed his successor a stacked deck—with an Activist policy in place and with its leading proponents, Dayan and Lavon, at the helm of the defence establishment, the most powerful organization in the country. Sharett, as Ben-Gurion sensed, was not the man to overcome or rein in the defence establishment. Sharett's assumption of office thus only seemingly inaugurated a new era and a new 'policy of restraint'. The policy never really got off the ground. The infiltrators gave Sharett no period of grace. And the army, led from December 1953 by Dayan, a masterly schemer with an unusual penchant for candour, was more militant than ever. Between 1948 and 1953 the army had bowed to Ben-Gurion's will. But the generals had little respect for the new prime minister and quite often acted behind his back. It took all of Sharett's powers to restrain them from offensives aimed at conquering Arab territory, in southern Lebanon, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and along the border with Egypt. And, just as Sharett and his fellow ministers were egged on and, to some extent, manipulated by the generals, so the Activist leaders themselves were continually spurred by aggressive junior officers, such as Sharon. The politicians often found that raids went far beyond the limits they had originally approved and that sometimes it was field commanders who had taken the initiative.

Sharett, essentially a weak man (Ben-Gurion was right on this score), was hemmed in, cajoled, and browbeaten by the defence establishment; his generally less moderate fellow Mapai ministers; the shadow of his predecessor, who could not keep out of affairs and was soon manœuvring to get back into the arena; and a public unwilling to take punishment from Arabs without response. Within the bureaucracy, Sharett's base of support was limited to the Foreign Ministry, whose staff was kept at arm's length from anything to do with defence policy by the defence establishment, except that they were required to explain IDF actions to the world after the event.

Sharett's premiership can be seen as a protracted, unsuccessful rearguard action. He argued that Israeli belligerence would alienate the West and increase popular Arab hatred of Israel, making the possibility of a negotiated settlement more remote. Ben-Gurion and Dayan thought otherwise. The Arabs were uninterested in peace, and sought only Israel's destruction; at best, they sought a settlement at a prohibitive (territorial) cost. As to the West, Ben-Gurion and Dayan had drawn a simple

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conclusion from the 1948 war (and from the Holocaust): Israel was alone, save for the financial and political aid of world Jewry. It could rely on no one else. The United States and Britain were primarily bent on containing Communism and were eager to befriend the Arab world or to retain its goodwill, needing the Arabs for their oil and geo-strategic positioning. The United States and Britain withheld arms and security guarantees from Israel for reasons of *realpolitik* and irrespective of reprisals, or how well or badly Israel behaved. Ben-Gurion, however, was also acutely aware of the need to avoid turning Israel into a pariah state.

Sharett was not a complete pushover. Occasionally, he put his foot down; repeatedly he forced the IDF to call off planned reprisals. He prised from the defence minister the latter's sole right to decide on retaliatory strikes and shifted the responsibility first to a 'committee of three' (prime minister, defence minister, and foreign minister), with the full Cabinet resolving any disagreements, and then to the Mapai ministerial caucus. But these victories were ephemeral and ineffective and he was eventually unable to rein in the Activists.

Britain and the United States believed that the retaliatory policy was immoral (the innocent were punished in place of the guilty), ineffective (it did not stop infiltration), and counter-productive (it sparked more Arab terrorism). But, despite suasion, threats, and occasional sanctions, they were unable to reverse it; they never applied sufficient pressure to make Ben-Gurion and his protégés sit up and listen. In part, this was because the West felt that Israel did have a case (the Arab states were belligerent; there were terrorist infiltrator attacks; and the Arab states had proved incapable of halting them); in part, because of a general sympathy for Israel, a fellow democracy and a pioneering Western outpost; because of a lack of sympathy for dictatorial and reactionary or 'progressive' Arab regimes; because their attention was, for the most part, focused on other problems, such as Korea and Central and Eastern Europe; and, lastly, because of internal political considerations of Jewish money and electoral power.

Washington and London, happy with Sharett's assumption of the premiership, hoped that he would usher in a period of tranquillity along Israel's borders that would permit them to pursue their anti-Soviet aims untroubled by Israeli—Arab skirmishing. But neither was willing to give Sharett the arms and security guarantees or pact that might have helped him fend off the Activists baying at his heels. Nor did the Arabs give him any respite along the borders.

Sharett's rule effectively ended in February 1955, though he remained prime minister for another half a year. Ben-Gurion's return to the Cabinet

and the Gaza Raid killed 'the policy of restraint', while the raid, the `Essek HaBish, and the hangings in Cairo in January 1955 put paid to any possibility of pacification along the Israeli-Egyptian border. Both countries were launched on a path of confrontation.

Although the records of Egyptian decision-making in the wake of the Gaza Raid are closed, Egyptian deeds (as well as words) provide ample evidence of the course Egyptian decision-makers took. Before the raid, there was no confrontational policy of harassment and guerrilla warfare. Afterwards, there clearly was, culminating in the recruitment and activation of Fedayeen from Gaza, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. The Egyptian-Czech arms deal of 1955 was also, at least in large measure, precipitated by the Gaza Raid. Quite rightly, the deal was seen at the time as marking both the Soviet Union's entry into the Middle Eastern arena and the abrupt transformation of the Arab-Israeli conflict from a purely regional confrontation into a mixed local *and* East-West conflict.

Before the Gaza Raid, Egypt's revolutionary regime had one major foreign policy goal: to evict the imperialist presence from Egypt and the Middle East. That was partially fulfilled in July and October 1954, with the accord providing for British withdrawal from the Canal Zone by June 1956. But Egyptians still feared that Britain would find an excuse not to leave, and, as long as British troops were situated along the Canal, close to Cairo and astride those Canal crossings through which an Egyptian army in Sinai would have to be supplied, Cairo was loath to contemplate a major clash with Israel. Indeed, a 'premature' clash with Israel could have provided the British with the excuse to stay in the Canal Zone that the Egyptians feared the British were seeking.

The Gaza Raid changed all that. Egypt had been savaged and humiliated; it sought vengeance, and it needed to arm and thus be able to confront, or at least deter, Israel. The raid was also a blow to Egypt's efforts to win the leadership of the Arab and Muslim worlds. The Gaza Raid, and the ensuing Czech arms deal, triggered the escalation to the 1956 war. The years 1955-6 witnessed the highly combustible confluence of an Israeli defence minister and prime minister who sought an opportunity to expand Israel's borders (and an at least equally expansionist CGS who was spoiling for a fight), with an Arab leader who was not averse to taking chances. The outcome was almost inevitable, though in somewhat different circumstances the target could have been Jordan's West Bank rather than Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip.

From the Gaza Raid onwards, events moved rapidly. The state-organized Fedayeen raiding and the threat of a potentially disastrous military imbalance wonderfully concentrated minds in Jerusalem. There was no more vague toying with expansionist proposals; the question was only when and in what circumstances. Overcoming the initial urge, in

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October-December 1955, to pre-empt Egypt, Ben-Gurion soberly weighed the problems of political isolation and military resupply. Besides, Egypt refused to fall into the successive traps set by Dayan. So the IDF hunkered down in a defensive posture while emissaries sought a major arms deal in the United States or France to offset Egypt's new weaponry. Washington proved elusive. But in April-June 1956 France broached a plan to topple Nasser. Israel could go to war against Egypt with new weapons and Western allies at its side. It was an enticing prospect for politicians and generals used to international isolation and condemnation. Thus, from Jerusalem's perspective, was the Sinai—Suez War conceived.

The IDF's Sinai Campaign, in October—November 1956, admixed elements of retribution, expansionism, and pre-emption. It was a massive punishment for all the Arab attacks and depredations along Israel's borders during the previous eight years, and, in a sense, a revenge for the hurt the Arab states had inflicted on the Yishuv in 1948. It was an expansionist war, in so far as its architects, Ben-Gurion and Dayan, hoped it would lead to Israel's occupation and annexation of tracts of Egyptian territory in the Sinai Peninsula from Rafah or E1 Arish down to Sharm ash Sheikh. And it was, in the long term, a pre-emptive war. It was not pre-emption in the immediate, narrow sense of destroying the Egyptian army before it became too strong, for that need no longer existed after the massive French arms shipments of spring and summer 1956. But it was pre-emptive in the sense that, between 1949 and 1956, Israelis believed that the Arab states would eventually launch a war to destroy the Jewish state. The Sinai Campaign aimed to thwart this, at least for some years, by destroying the Arab world's potentially strongest army and buying Israel time, during which, perhaps, the Arabs would abandon their destructive goal. The momentary coalescence of Israeli, French, and British antagonism towards Nasser's Egypt during the summer and autumn of 1956 enabled Ben-Gurion to launch his war with Anglo-French political protection and aerial and sea cover, and with the prospect of minimal Israeli losses.

Israel's border policy and the plunge into the Sinai Campaign cannot be understood without taking into account the deep feeling of isolation and siege that prevailed between 1949 and 1956. The threat of a 'Second Round', Arab propaganda and political warfare, including the refusal to recognize the Jewish state's right to exist, the blockade of Israeli shipping and air traffic at the Straits of Tiran, and the closure of the Suez Canal to Israeli ships and goods, the US witholding of arms, and, above all, the constant infiltration, the attacks, and the border skirmishes, all contributed. The war of 1956 was a momentous release of pent-up, vengeful energies.

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Biographical Notes

`Abdullah, Ibn Husayn (1882-1951): b. Mecca; King of Jordan (earlier Transjordan), 1946-July 1951.

Acheson, Dean (Gooderham) (1893-1971): b. Middletown, Connecticut; Senior State Department official, 1941-9; US Secretary of State, 1949-53.

Ben-Gurion, David (1886-1973): b. Poland; settled in Palestine 1906; Leader of Mapai; Chairman of Jewish Agency, 1935-May 1948; Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of Israel, May 1948-January 1954; Minister of Defence, February 1955-63; Prime Minister, November 1955-63.

Bennike, Vagn (1888-1970): Major-General, Danish Army; Chief of Staff, UNTSO, June 1953-August 1954.

Burns, E. L. M. (1897-?): b. Canada, Lieutenant-General, Canadian Army; Chief of Staff, UNTSO, August 1954-November 1956; Commander of UNEF, November 1956-9.

Dayan, Moshe (1915-81): b. Degania, Palestine; Haganah officer and IDF battalion OC, 1948; Military Governor of Jerusalem, 1948-9; OC Southern Command, 1950-1; IDF OC Operations, 1952-3; IDF CGS, December 1953-January 1958; Israel Defence Minister, 1967-74; Foreign Minister, 1977-9.

Dulles, John Foster (1888-1959): b. Washington DC; Lawyer; US Secretary of State, 1953-9.

Eban, Abba (Aubrey) (1915-): b. Cape Town: Israel Ambassador to UN, 1949-59 and Ambassador to US, 1950-9; Mapai MK; Minister of Education; Deputy Prime Minister, 1963-6; Foreign Minister, 1966-74.

Eden, Sir Anthony (1897-1977): b. Windlestone, England; British Foreign Secretary, 1935-8; Secretary of State for War, 1940-5; Foreign Secretary, 1951-5; Prime Minister, 1955-7.

Eshkol (Shkolnik), Levi (1895-1969): b. Russia; Mapai politician; Deputy Defence Minister, 1948; Director of Jewish Agency Settlement Department, September 1948-June 1963; Minister of Finance, 1952-63; Prime Minister, 1963-9.

Eytan (Ettinghausen), Walter (1910-): b. Munich; Director General, Israel Foreign Ministry, 1948-59.

Farouq I (1920-65): b. Cairo, Egypt; King of Egypt, 1936-July 1952.

Glubb, General John Bagot (1897-1986): b. Preston, England; Commander of the Arab Legion (the Jordanian Army), 1939-March 1956.

Gur, Mordechai ('Motta') (1930-): b. Palestine; OC IDF paratroop company, 1954-5; OC paratroop battalion, 1956; IDF CGS, 1974-8; Deputy Defence Minister, 1992-.

Hafez, Mustafa (?-1956): Director of Gaza HQ, Egyptian military intelligence, and Fedayeen organizer and controller, 1954-6.

Hammarskjold, Dag (1905-61): b. Jönköping, Sweden; UN Secretary-General, 1953-61.

Har-Zion, Meir (1934-): b. Rishpon, Palestine. Chief scout and legendary fighter IDF Unit 101 (and, later, IDF Paratroop Battalion), 1953-6.

al Husayni, Hajj Muhammad Amin (1895?-1974): b. Jerusalem; President Arab Higher Committee, 1946-8; leader of Palestine Arabs, 1948.

al Husayni, Jamal (1893?-1982): b. Jerusalem; AHC representative to UN, 1947-8; Adviser to Saudi Government, 1950s.

Hussein Ibn Talal (1935-): b. Amman, Jordan; King of Jordan, 1953-.

Ikar (Kaufman), Avraham (1899-1980): b. Russia; Senior Haganah officer 1920s and 1930s; Director of Jewish Agency Settlement Department's Security Section, 1950s.

Lavon (Lubianiker), Pinhas (1904-76): b. Poland; settled in Palestine 1929; Mapai politician; Minister of Agriculture, 1950-2; Minister of Defence, 1954-February 1955.

Meir (Myerson), Golda (1898-1975): b. Kiev; Director of Jewish Agency Political Department in Jerusalem, 1948; Minister of Labour, 1949-56; Foreign Minister, July 1956-65; Prime Minister, 1969-74.

Nasser, Gamal `Abdel (1918-1970): b. Alexandria, Egypt; Egyptian Army officer; Leader of Free Officers movement and Revolutionary Command Council which overthrew Farouq regime and took power July 1952; Prime Minister of Egypt, 1954-6; President, 1956-70.

Palmon, Yehoshua (1914-): Haganah Intelligence Officer, 1940s; Prime Minister's Adviser on Arab Affairs, 1949-54.

Sharett (Shertok), Moshe (1894-1965): b. Ukraine; settled in Palestine, 1906; Director of Jewish Agency Political Department, 1933-May 1948; Foreign Minister of Israel, May 1948-July 1956; Prime Minister, January 1954-November 1955; Chairman of Jewish Agency, 1960-5.

Sharon, Ariel (1928-): b. Kfar Malal, Palestine; Haganah/IDF officer, 1948; OC Unit 101, 1953; OC Paratroop Battalion and then Brigade, 1954-6; IDF divisional commander, 1967 and 1973; Israel Defence Minister, 1981-3.

Shiloah (Zaslani), Reuven (1909-59): b. Jerusalem; Director of Israel Foreign Ministry Political Division, 1948-51; Founding Director of the Mossad, 1951-2; Israeli Minister Plenipotentiary in Washington, 1953-7.

Shitrit, Bechor Shalom (1895-1967): b. Tiberias; Minister for Minority Affairs, 1948-9; Minister of Police, 1949-66.

Shuckburgh, Sir Evelyn (1909-): b. Britain; Principal Private Secretary, FO 1951-4; Assistant Under-Secretary, responsible for Middle East, 1954-6.

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Weitz, Yosef (1890-1972): b. Poland; Director of JNF Lands Department, 1932-67; Member of JNF Directorate, 1950-67.

Yadin (Sukenik), Yigael (1917-85): b. Jerusalem: IDF OC Operations, 1948-9; IDG CGS, 1949-52; Professor of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1963-77; Deputy Prime Minister, 1977-81.

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